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## EDITORIAL

This is the season of the year when all across Europe and the Middle East Baptist Unions and Conventions are holding their annual assemblies and meetings. For some, there are routine meetings every year, with special election Assemblies every four years. For others, each annual meeting has elections and business to be transacted.

These events vary. This year the British Baptist Assembly was held in Plymouth in the south west of England with over 2,000 people present. The Russian Baptists held their four-yearly Assembly in a packed Central Baptist Church in Moscow (meeting there for the first time since the new freedoms). It was a time for a new leadership to be appointed and there was an important emphasis on mission. The Czech Baptists met in Brno in Moravia to reflect further on studies they have been doing about key aspects of congregationalism. These, and many other such gatherings, displayed a wide variety of worship styles, ways of conducting business and attitudes to visitors.

For some there were important constitutional changes to agree; for others, difficult discussions on policy and future structures. Always, there was the welcome of visitors from other Unions and the wider Baptist family, preaching and inspirational singing. Generally greetings were received from Christians from other traditions. We pray for all those who have been called to office to serve the Unions and Conventions of the EBF during this assembly and conference season.

We have argued before in this Journal that the words ‘Baptist’ and ‘Independent’ do not belong in the same sentence (Volume 1, Number 1), but the interdependency of Baptists across Europe and the Middle East takes a variety of forms. Though we are united in nations and in the EBF as a Baptist family, we are also very diverse in our practices, worship, mission and community life. What, then, are the ties of *koinonia* amongst us?

The role of General Secretaries within the EBF and the Unions is a vital one. The word ‘Secretary’ can imply the writer of letters, but in some ways our General Secretaries are ‘living letters’. For most of them, travel is an essential ingredient, between the churches of their Union and within the Unions of the wider Baptist family. We have been greatly blessed in the fifty-two years of the European Baptist Federation by having a succession of ‘living letters’ as our General Secretaries of the whole of the EBF:

- Walter O Lewis            1950 – 1955
- Henry Cook                1955 – 1959

- Erik Rudén                      1959 – 1965
- Ronald Goulding              1965 – 1976
- Gerhard Claas                1976 – 1980
- Knud Wümpelmann        1980 – 1989
- Karl Heinz Walter          1989 – 1999
- Theodor Angelov          1999 – present

These people have played a significant role in helping European Baptists experience interdependency. They have been ‘living letters’ between the Unions and Conventions.

This year Knud Wümpelmann celebrates his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday and we honour him as an elder statesman amongst us. It is a great delight to publish a paper by Bent Hylleberg giving some account of the remarkable ministry of Karen and Knud, which has been significant for Baptists in Denmark, Europe and throughout the BWA. We join with the very many friends of Knud throughout the world in greeting him.

As we list the General Secretaries of the EBF we realise we have our own informal delight in succession. It is a delight always to see a new generation rising up and taking on this messenger function of helping communities catch something of the wider life of the people of God. No less than six European Baptist Union General Secretaries are currently students at IBTS and we welcome a paper from one of their number, Linas Andronovas from Lithuania. There is an important task given to those called out to servant leadership amongst us to reflect on the life and spirituality of the churches and help us discern appropriate ways forward as we respond to God.

One important task which many Unions are engaged in is proper research and writing up of the history of Baptists in their country. The *Journal of European Baptist Studies* is a prime vehicle for publishing the first fruits of such research. Of course, we hope in time to see all Unions being able to publish comprehensive histories of their churches, but in the meantime there is other work to be done. Irina Bondareva offers an excellent insight into the varied beginnings and early years of the Baptist communities in Moldova. She represents the new generation of talented historians amongst us.

Finally, one of our adjunct lecturing team, Dr Bill Weldon, offers some helpful and practical insights into how people learn. Bill has committed himself to offering his skills within the *Consortium of European Baptist Theological Schools* and we thank him for that.

**The Revd Keith G Jones**  
Rector, IBTS

## **KNUD WÜMPELMANN**

### **General Secretary of the European Baptist Federation and President of the Baptist World Alliance**

#### **Introduction**

In his autobiographical notes<sup>1</sup> Knud Wümpelmann (KW) begins by mentioning his date of baptism, Easter, 12 April 1936. He was thirteen years old. This reference is typical for KW and his understanding of life: Life springs from God's grace – and people become what God's grace creates through them. In this sketch, I will present what God did in and through KW's life among Baptists world-wide, by painting a portrait of KW, using four strokes of the brush: his formation in Denmark; his work as a pastor and Danish Baptist leader; his wider Baptist ministry in the European Baptist Federation and the Baptist World Alliance; and his theology.

#### **1. 'I Danmark er jeg født, dér har jeg hjemme; dér har jeg rod, derfra min verden går...'** **H.C. Andersen, 1850**

*'In Denmark I am born, there is my home; there are my roots, from there my world begins...'*

KW was born – as was Hans Christian Andersen – in Odense on Funen. He entered the world in 1922 and grew up as the only child in a Christian family. His father suffered from incurable tuberculosis, his case being regarded as hopeless by the most famous doctors in Copenhagen. The family asked a Pentecostal minister to pray for him and he was instantaneously healed. This happened when KW was six years old.<sup>2</sup> Afterwards he firmly believed in God's power: 'God is able!' became a watchword for his ministry.

The family belonged to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, but after this healing they were baptised as believers by the Pentecostal minister, who borrowed the local Baptist church for baptisms. So it happened that KW became an active Sunday school child in the Baptist congregation, where both he and his parents later became members. Because KW's parents owned a home for elderly people, guest speakers who visited the

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was prepared in co-operation with KW, who kindly lent me his personal papers and notes. KW has, since 1979, lived next to the Baptist Theological Seminary, Tølløse, where I began to teach in 1985.

<sup>2</sup> See KW: 'The EBF and the Charismatic Movement', in Report on the Seminar-Consultation of National Baptist Unions of Socialist Countries, Moscow 1979, pp. 37f.

congregation in Odense usually stayed in their home. In this way KW got to know personally many pastors, evangelists and foreign missionaries, among them the Chinese leader Watchman Nee and the Swedish missionary to Congo, Aron Andersson.

KW was educated in the field of the Post & Telegraph Service. He began his education on the day of the outbreak of the Second World War, and graduated in 1944. From his upbringing in Odense he had learned to appreciate Christians from different denominations. Living in several places in Denmark during his education, he met Christians from different churches who learned to appreciate him as a committed Christian. For a period he prayed his morning prayer with a Lutheran; later he was asked by his Lutheran landlady in Copenhagen to conduct devotions in her pension once a week.

As he moved around, KW belonged to several local Baptist congregations. Staying for short periods in each place he could not serve in ministries that required continuity. Therefore, he asked his young pastor in Aarhus, Kjell Kyrø-Rasmussen (KKR), for a list of elderly people who needed a visit. The pastor took the opportunity to ask KW if he had thought of becoming a minister. From this moment KW's life changed. God confirmed his personal call to ministry. Many years later a Danish newspaper wrote: 'From the beginning KW considered a career with the Post & Telegraph Service. If he had continued there he certainly would have become the General Secretary. And the Danes wouldn't have had so many problems with the Department as we have today'!<sup>3</sup>

KW now began his second education – training from 1944 to 1947 at the Baptist Theological Seminary in Tølløse. Here he experienced the German occupation of his country when the Seminary buildings were seized by German soldiers in the spring of 1945. The students were hosted in a local Baptist home belonging to a bank manager for six months until the war was over. Shortly afterwards, KW became engaged to one of the bank manager's daughters, Karen. 1947 became a key year for Karen and Knud Wümpelmann: He graduated from the Seminary, they were married, and they encountered the world-wide Baptist family at the BWA congress in Copenhagen.

The name 'Wümpelmann' has its origin in German, where it was used for the warrior who went ahead of the soldiers carrying a streamer [*Ein Wimpel*] in order to show the direction for the army; therefore, he was called 'The Wimpelmann'. This became the task for KW – being a standard-bearer for Baptists who dedicated their lives for the Kingdom of

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<sup>3</sup> *Berlingske Tidende*, 7 August 1989, when KW (in Zagreb) had been nominated as the incoming President of the BWA.

God, serving Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit – in Denmark, in Europe and world-wide.

## 2. ‘Give tongues of fire and hearts of love to preach the reconciling word...’ J. Montgomery, 1823

*‘Tunger af ild og dog prædiken mild giv dem, du salver og sender’ - N. F. S. Grundtvig, 1837.*

Karen and Knud Wümpelmann had their first home in Pandrup, a small town in northern Jutland where KW became the assistant pastor of a congregation of over 500 members. They stayed there from 1947-50. His colleague was a wise, elderly minister, Laurits Jørgensen, who was educated at Morgan Park, Chicago, and who had served as President of the Danish Baptist Union for ten years. He was a balanced leader, known for this saying: ‘You can tell the truth in two ways – do it one way and the hearts will open, do it another way and they will close’.<sup>4</sup> KW’s diplomacy was undoubtedly stimulated through Jørgensen’s gentle and yet firm style of ministry. A second lesson which the Wümpelmanns learnt in northern Jutland was endurance and hard work in ministry. KW served a scattered congregation with five churches and several mission stations, and with a bicycle as the only means of transportation. He earned only a small salary and yet the expectations of the minister’s hospitality were great in a post-war Denmark suffering from shortages of almost everything. In 1949 their first son, Jørgen, was born. KW became the editor of *D.B. Juniores* - a magazine for Danish Baptist teenagers – a position he held for four years from 1948-1952.

Their second home was in Copenhagen, from 1950-64, where KW was also an assistant pastor, but now in a different setting. His colleague here was Dr F. Bredahl Petersen. KW learned from Bredahl Petersen’s heavy international engagement, his scholarly career and teaching, his involvement in Baptist aid programmes in Poland, Holland and among German refugees in Denmark (300 of these were baptised), and his pioneering work in the growing post-war fellowship of European Baptists. Peterson was one of the ‘founding fathers’ of the EBF and its first President in 1950, while also serving as President of the Danish Baptist Union from 1949-54!<sup>5</sup>

In Bredahl Petersen, KW also met an eager evangelist with a vision, not only for Europe, but also for Copenhagen. The congregation grew in his years as pastor by 100%, with 450 members in 1953. His projects

<sup>4</sup> B Hylleberg and B M Jørgensen, *Et kirkesamfund bliver til* (København, 1989), p. 306.

<sup>5</sup> For Dr F Bredahl Petersen, see Bernard Green, *Crossing the Boundaries. A History of the European Baptist Federation* (Didcot, 1999). In 1957 Bredahl Petersen emigrated to the United States.

included not only the construction of the new Købner-Memorial Church, inaugurated in 1939, but also residential buildings around the church – the second one completed in 1951 to serve as a pension and hall of residence for Baptist students going to Copenhagen. From 1945 the church building also housed a kindergarten, in addition to the existing youth work and Baptist scouts. KW was an ardent young minister, serving especially the youth of the congregation. In 1951 he also chaired a special committee planning a mission-campaign with around 100 weeks of preaching in 175 different places all over Denmark. Danish Baptists had already seen his organising talent.

In 1955, after two years of studies in the United States (see below), the Købner-Memorial Church asked KW to become their leader and minister, following the departure of Petersen. He served in this position until 1964. Their second son, Mogens, was born in 1955. Initially, KW had to address serious deficits in the finances of the church – and he succeeded. Another challenge for KW was to minister to a growing congregation whose inner needs had not been sufficiently met in the last part of Petersen's ministry. When KW left the church after ten years of ministry, in order to become the first General Secretary of the Danish Baptist Union, the Købner-Memorial Church numbered 360 members. Over the same period the Union membership also decreased.

The Danish Baptist Union very soon became aware of KW's gifts. After returning from the USA he became a member of the Union's Sunday School Board and served as its chairperson from 1957. This brought him directly into the leadership of the Union with a seat on the Executive Committee of the Union (i.e. the Committee of Home and Foreign Mission). He created a correspondence course for training Sunday School teachers, with 260 participants from all the congregations. He also became the Baptist member of the interdenominational Danish Sunday School Society. He was especially aware of the need for nurturing the Christian faith of teenagers brought up in the free church milieu; for those he wrote a pioneering catechism (see below).

Re-elected to the Executive Committee in 1959, KW became a member of the Foreign Mission Subcommittee. After a year he became chairperson of this committee which worked especially with mission in Central Africa (Burundi and Rwanda) where Danish Baptists had begun this work in 1928. In 1963 he visited these countries shortly after their independence (1962) and the formation of their new Baptist Unions (1960). A dream from his childhood came true. Having this chair he became the observer for the free churches in The (Lutheran) Danish Mission Council. Here KW had to face a new pioneering task in Danish church life.



In The (Lutheran) Danish Mission Council, KW soon became known and loved for his ecumenical approach to ministry. What he had learnt as a child in Odense among Christians from several denominations now became a reality in his ministry between different churches. This was a breakthrough in a Lutheran state-church setting where Baptists had been imprisoned one hundred years earlier and where they were still considered sectarian by most Lutherans. In 1963 KW was elected as one out of four (another was a Lutheran bishop) people for a special task within the Mission Council – to draw up guidelines for a new Danish (Ecumenical) Mission Council where the free churches would be received as full members. The following year KW was elected as the first free church representative on the steering body of this new ecumenical Mission Council. Later, he did a similar pioneering work within the Danish Bible Society (1970) and DanChurch Aid (1978). As General Secretary of the EBF he was able to act as facilitator for both Bibles and money from these bodies to go to Eastern European Baptists.

The Danish Baptist Union had for some years discussed the need for a General Secretary. Until 1964, when the Union celebrated its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary, pastors had mainly undertaken the functions of a General Secretary as volunteers. But in 1964 the annual conference decided almost unanimously to call KW to this ministry. In Baptist congregations, in different ecumenical circles in Denmark, and abroad in Baptist life and mission he was already known and respected for his unselfish and amiable ministry. The decision of the conference proved to be a blessing for the Baptists of Denmark. Both Karen and Knud were diligent servants of the Lord; they dedicated their efforts, their home and their lovely personalities to the work of the Danish Baptists for the next sixteen years, from 1964-1980.<sup>6</sup>

During his first year as General Secretary, KW visited all the congregations in the Union, 42 in number. He did this each year in his next three years in office. He cared for the congregations as well as being a minister to the ministers. He understood his ministry as ‘general’, i.e. ‘for all’, [*kat 'olos*] – for the sake of God's people<sup>7</sup>. As a part of his ministry, KW was responsible for foreign missions, relationships with the world-wide Baptist family, and some of the ecumenical relationships with churches in Denmark and abroad. Within the Union he struggled to upgrade the fellowship in several areas: in offerings, stressing generosity,

<sup>6</sup> When the Union's leadership expressed thanks on behalf of the Danish Baptists to KW, Karen was always mentioned. See *Baptist Yearbook* (hereafter *BY*) 1974, p. 50; and *BY* 1980, p. 42. Their service for Baptists world-wide always became a ministry for both of them; when KW was asked to become the General Secretary of EBF/BWA-Europe he said: ‘My wife and I have, after careful consideration, accepted this call’; see *BY* 1980, p. 81.

<sup>7</sup> From the introduction to his very first annual report as ‘general’ secretary, see *BY* 1965, p. 14.

participation and fairness; in theological education, including new buildings for the Seminary in Tølløse; in evangelism, understood as word and deed; in renewal of structures for home mission; and in profiling the Baptists in their Danish context.<sup>8</sup> Here KW's education within the Post & Telegraph Service became a resource. A report from the President of the Union in 1966 reads: 'KW works with comprehensive statistical material; every area in the Union is analysed and surveyed'.<sup>9</sup> Afterwards, when KW had done his homework, action was taken in co-operation with the leadership of the different committees and the local churches for the sake of the Kingdom.

KW's sense of obligation to engage in ministry was heavy and his capacity for work became legendary among Danish Baptists. On one occasion 'KW' was interpreted as 'kilowatt': 'One K(ilo) W(att) is an equivalent to 1000 Watt and if you put it into one bulb you will get an enormous light! I know that KW doesn't agree! Let us then divide into light and warmth and we all agree!'<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, when KW became the General Secretary of EBF/BWA-Europe the Danish Baptists made two full time jobs out of one, appointing a new General Secretary but also a Secretary for International Mission.<sup>11</sup> For 16 years Karen and Knud Wümpelmann had served Danish Baptists in a visionary, hard working and (primarily) reconciling ministry of the Gospel.

### **3. 'In Christ there is no east or west, in Him no south or north, but one great fellowship of love...'**

**John Oxenham, 1908**

*'I Kristus er ej øst og vest, ej heller syd og nord, kun kærlighedens fællesskab...' - Einar Torstensson, 1947*

As General Secretary of the Baptist Union from 1964 KW was responsible for relationships with both the EBF and the BWA. Each year he reported, in written form, with enthusiasm and love about these Baptist-bodies, and he tried to open the eyes and ears of Danish Baptists to the blessings flowing from them.

When KW became the General Secretary and Treasurer of the EBF in 1980 he had already served as President of the European Baptist Federation (1977-79). As General Secretary of the Danish Baptist Union he had served on the EBF Council for thirteen years (since 1967). But his relationship with European Baptists reached back much further. In 1952

<sup>8</sup> From KW's annual report, *BY* 1967, pp. 16ff.

<sup>9</sup> Carl Thomsen, *BY* 1966, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup> John Poulsen, *Baptist Weekly* 14-15/1969.

<sup>11</sup> *BY* 1980, pp. 41f.

KW served as host in the Congress Office at the first European Baptist Congress organised by the Købner-Memorial Church of Copenhagen.<sup>12</sup> The year before, KW participated in the Pastors' Conference at the new Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüschlikon, inaugurated in 1949. These two platforms for European Baptist fellowship and theological reflection became important for the life and ministry of KW.

In the 1980s much effort had to be put into the Baptist Theological Seminary in Rüschlikon, partly due to deficits but also because of a growing crisis between the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and the EBF regarding the Seminary. As General Secretary of the EBF, KW served as chairman of the Seminary's Board of Trustees (1980-89). In 1989, Dr Keith Parks, the President of the SBC Foreign Mission Board, handed the key of the Seminary to KW as a symbol of transference of ownership; a great day of partnership between men of honour – to be followed by days of distress and disappointment. But by the time troubles multiplied, KW was no longer the EBF General Secretary.<sup>13</sup>

Most of KW's EBF efforts went into Eastern Europe. In 1970 KW was challenged by the EBF when he was asked to make contacts behind the Iron Curtain in the Soviet Union and, if possible, enable a better understanding between the two groups of Baptists living there – one group trying to minister in a legal way (AUCECB), the other (Reform Baptists, CCECB) being in open conflict with the communist regime. KW's first visit took place at the beginning of 1971.<sup>14</sup> In these pioneering years of reconciliation KW rarely met representatives from the Reform Baptists, but he was well informed about their conditions and points of view.<sup>15</sup> These contacts were as important to KW as were his years of theological studies in the States and his visits to Central Africa on behalf of the Danish Baptists. He experienced fellowship across borders and unity in Christ, despite different conditions of ministry.

At the same time, in the Nordic Baptist Unions, KW played an important role in creating fellowship between Baptists in the East and North of Europe. From 1970, annual conferences were held in a Scandinavian or an Eastern European country, and the number of participating Eastern European Baptists increased continually. The

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<sup>12</sup> See Bernard Green, *Crossing*, p. 23. KW participated in each European Baptist Congress in years to come except in Berlin 1958 and in Amsterdam 1964.

<sup>13</sup> For the troubles at Rüschlikon, which became more acute from 1990, see Bernard Green, *Crossing*, pp. 185ff.

<sup>14</sup> Bernard Green, *Crossing*, pp. 53ff. The two groups of Baptists bore the names 'All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists' and 'Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists'.

<sup>15</sup> Six accounts from KW's journey to the Soviet Union were published in *Baptist Weekly*, 6-12, 1971. See also KW: 'European Baptists and Baptists in the USSR', in Denton Lotz (Ed): *Baptist Witness in the USSR*, (ABC/USA, 1987), pp. 49ff.

gatherings took place in Scandinavia due to the unaligned status of these countries during the Cold War period. The programme was established primarily for lay people and it was set up as a joint venture between Baptists in Scandinavia and American Baptist Churches/USA in order to equip lay leaders for their ministries and to create a breathing space for believers in Eastern countries.<sup>16</sup>

KW visited the Soviet Union about twenty times during his ministry within the EBF and the BWA. Some of the visits were as a result of invitations to Peace Conferences arranged by the Orthodox Church along with the Baptists. Mostly he met with the chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs and, in time, he also met the Reform Baptists. KW saw such visits as opportunities for reconciliation and bridge building. A firm stance for peace and human rights was important, as well as the supply of more theological books for the East. Therefore KW gave high priority to these themes and, as EBF General Secretary, he and others visited all Eastern European countries on behalf of the Books and Translations Committee.<sup>17</sup> When the wall came down in 1989 KW's term as General Secretary came to a close; but God had opened a new era in European life – for Baptists, too.

A new challenge for Christians in Europe was highlighted by KW in 1982 when he drew attention to the twenty-four million Muslims in Europe. He spoke of a 'new challenge on our doorstep'. At the same time he mentioned the growing problem of refugees in Europe and characterised this as an opportunity to welcome and care for 'the strangers within our gates'.<sup>18</sup> Over the years he was not only a visionary leader, but on his constant journeys around Europe he was 'a patient negotiator, a constant encourager, a faithful advocate and a tireless visitor'. His 'kind and gracious personality endeared him to European Baptists, who trusted him widely and recognised his statesmanlike qualities and deep spirituality'.<sup>19</sup> Asked about his capacities, KW spoke with humour about his health: 'Thank God, I am a sound sleeper and I have a stomach like an ostrich!'<sup>20</sup>

After 42 years of ministry – 17 years as a pastor in two different local Baptist churches (except for two years of theological studies in the USA), and 25 years as General Secretary for both Danish and European Baptists – KW had reached the age of retirement. But God still had a task for him in the BWA – although he himself worked for the nomination of a

<sup>16</sup> For a history of 'The Lay Conference', see Sven Svenson: *Building Bridges. Personal Conclusions Concerning the Activities of the Lay Conference Committee 1970-1996* (Stockholm, 1996). See also, Bernard Green, *Crossing*, pp. 69ff and 179ff.

<sup>17</sup> Bernard Green, *Crossing*, p. 77 (KW agreed with David Russell about the priorities) and pp. 170ff.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard Green, *Crossing*, pp. 89f.

<sup>19</sup> This evaluation of KW's nine years of ministry for EBF is from Bernard Green, *Crossing*, p. 123.

<sup>20</sup> *Holbæk Amts Venstreblad* [a local newspaper], 4.8.1982 - an interview for KW's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday.

colleague, Birgit Karlsson, General Secretary of the Swedish Baptist Union – as President of the Alliance. For this task he had been trained for more than 40 years, having met the BWA for the very first time at the Baptist World Congress in Copenhagen in 1947. Here he served on the Committee of Theological Students.<sup>21</sup>

KW's official ministry within the BWA began when he was elected General Secretary of the Danish Baptist Union. He served for 30 years on the General Council, 1965-95, for 5 years on the Study Commission on Co-operative Christianity (ecumenism, 1970-75) and another 5 years on the Congress Program Committee (1975-80). A special ministry was serving on the Study Commission on Baptist-Lutheran Bilateral Conversations (1986-89).<sup>22</sup> Since 1965 he had participated in each Baptist World Congress. When nominated as President, KW had been involved in the BWA for about half of its time as a Christian world family. Analysing his engagement with the Alliance, it becomes obvious that KW utilised his knowledge of Baptist history and identity for the benefit of present day Baptists.

KW was aware that he had become the President of a world organisation.<sup>23</sup> In his presidential reports his focus was always world-wide, being aware of the different political contexts in which Baptist Unions had to serve and co-operate. He not only brought this hermeneutical perspective to his practice, but he also saw the need for analysis, planning and strategies on a world-wide scale. His reports were illustrated by figures and numbers telling the fascinating facts of growth within the BWA fellowship<sup>24</sup> – facts he used to challenge and encourage Baptists world-wide to serve more diligently. Healthy finances were also a challenge. KW struggled continually in this area, to reach the budgets, to find resources for relief-programmes and to establish an endowment jubilee 2000 fund. But he knew that economy has to do with commitment. Our ministry should be lived out 'not only in kind words...but also in practical deeds ... and in financial support'.<sup>25</sup>

Examples of the above-mentioned hermeneutical approach can be found in KW's report given in 1990 at the dawn of a new era that began with the fall of the Berlin wall and the collapse of the communist world in Europe. As a member of the official Danish delegation to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in 1990 he described the

<sup>21</sup> Johs. Nørgaard (et al): *Baptisternes syvende Verdenskongres* (København, 1948), pg. 179, and the *Official Report of the Seventh Baptist World Congress*, London 1948, pp. 60f.

<sup>22</sup> KW served also on the Steering Committee of the Conference of International Mission Secretaries 1980-89.

<sup>23</sup> President's Report, BWA Agenda Book (hereafter PRAB) 1991, pp. 39f. and PRAB 1994, p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> PRAB 1993, pp. 41f. and PRAB 1995, pp. 51f.

<sup>25</sup> PRAB 1994, p. 42, and PRAB 1991, p. 41.

results of this conference for Europe as another European Magna Carta – given to us for the purpose of mission.<sup>26</sup> Representing the BWA at the United Nations' World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 he used the opportunity given him to stress Baptists' concerns for religious liberty as the fundamental human right: 'If there is not freedom of religion and consciousness for all, there is not religious liberty at all'.<sup>27</sup> KW rejoiced in being an international observer at the first democratic election in South Africa, representing the BWA as one of the NGOs with consultative status at the United Nations. And he did not forget the Baptists in South Africa: 'The end of apartheid was celebrated with great joy, new hopes and deep felt thanks to God in both black, coloured and white Baptist Churches.'<sup>28</sup>

A Christian world-family lives in different regions. Coming from the oldest one of these (the EBF was organised in 1949), KW always worked hard to implement effective regional bodies in the life of the BWA<sup>29</sup> – rejoicing in 1982 when Africa was organised as a Baptist-region, the last continent where this took place. During his presidency KW travelled to each of these regions using his European experience. He had seen the great influence on European Baptists of the Seminary in Rüschlikon and he stated that the need for theological training was evident in Africa and South America. Two other aspects were observed by KW: coming from a small Union he drew attention to the fact that almost two-thirds of the BWA member bodies were minority churches with less than 25,000 members each.<sup>30</sup> And speaking about his beloved Africa he stated: 'Let it not be forgotten that one out of every eleven Baptist churches in the world is in Africa!'<sup>31</sup> As a caring president, he went to the churches in Rwanda shortly after the genocide in 1994 to bring comfort and hope. Together with Roger Fredrikson he led the BWA Good Will Mission to Manipur, India in 1995, trying to reconcile the fighting Kukis and Nagas.

Speaking about Asia, KW participated in 1992 in the bicentenary jubilee of William Carey and the founding of the Baptist Missionary Society. Remembering this joyful event, he called Baptists to renew their mission goal and methods: 'Carey's inspiring example of careful examination of actual needs around the world, of deep and unselfish holistic concern for the peoples living in the poorer part of the world, and

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<sup>26</sup> PRAB 1991, pp. 39f.

<sup>27</sup> PRAB 1993, p. 43, and PRAB 1994, pg. 41. Here KW spoke of 'a holistic approach to human rights', including both personal rights (traditionally stressed by western countries, being freedom of conscience, religious liberty, freedom of expression, the right to a fair trial, freedom from torture etc) and social and economic rights (earlier stressed by the communist countries, now by the developing countries, being freedom from poverty and freedom to develop) - all human rights being universal.

<sup>28</sup> PRAB 1994, p. 39.

<sup>29</sup> PRAB 1993, p. 42.

<sup>30</sup> PRAB 1990, p. 54.

<sup>31</sup> PRAB 1994, p. 39.

of visionary and courageous action, continues to challenge Baptists around the world.’<sup>32</sup> Two years later he visited the Protestant Church in China and spoke of mission and Christian Unity, stating: ‘Perhaps we should regard the Chinese experiment as one of God’s pilot projects for the future of the Christian Church.’<sup>33</sup> A follow up on his final challenges to Christians in Europe took place when the BWA (1993) held a Conference on Un-evangelised People, dealing especially with mission among Muslims<sup>34</sup>, and when the BWA prepared for a proposed initiative for bilateral dialogue with the Orthodox Churches.<sup>35</sup> Mission and unity belong together, KW stressed, for the future church.<sup>36</sup>

KW was therefore also deeply concerned about ‘severe tensions’ within the Baptist family itself, not least about the situation within the SBC. These tensions have, he wrote, ‘caused much concern and prayer for a peaceful solution. To our deep-rooted Baptist heritage belongs the readiness to fight both for our own conviction and for the freedom of others to follow their conscience, that ‘speaking the truth in love we may grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ’.<sup>37</sup> Maybe it was because of these difficulties that KW compared the BWA to ‘the famous bumble bee which theoretically should not be able to fly but nevertheless does so quite well. The differences between the member bodies of the BWA are great and of many kinds: political, cultural, sociological and theological, so that tensions naturally occur. But the divine call to unity and the need for fellowship and co-operation has also throughout this quinquennium proved to be stronger than the dividing force of diversities’.<sup>38</sup>

Denton Lotz hit the mark when he gave thanks to KW for his BWA-ministry by saying ‘Farewell to a World Pastor’ and continued: ‘Each president brings certain qualities which build up the body of Christ. We are particularly grateful to Knud Wümpelmann for his pastoral service... He has been a strong advocate for the poor and dispossessed. His concern for peace and human rights has been exemplary. In difficult times he has encouraged and comforted Baptist leaders... His commitment to the compassionate ministry and the evangelistic ministry of the whole church has encouraged and uplifted Baptist work everywhere!’<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> PRAB 1993, p. 41.

<sup>33</sup> PRAB 1995, p. 40. This was KW’s second visit to China. He was there in 1986 with a BWA-delegation.

<sup>34</sup> PRAB 1994, p. 40.

<sup>35</sup> PRAB 1995, p. 53.

<sup>36</sup> See Knud Wümpelmann: ‘Mission in a Changing Europe’ in *American Baptist Quarterly* 2/1996, pp. 146-157. He writes: ‘There is in Europe an urgent need for evangelization, reconciliation and unification.’

<sup>37</sup> PRAB 1991, p. 40.

<sup>38</sup> PRAB 1995, p. 53.

<sup>39</sup> General Secretary’s Report, BWA Agenda Book 1995, pp. 65f.

When KW was asked in 1995 what he wanted his presidency to be remembered for he typically replied: 'My 'presidency' is not so important! What counts is God's mercy to His people and of that we have received a great deal: the growth of our membership... the unity in diversity strong enough to keep us together, the help in times of great distress... and the gift of hope for a great future'. And the manner in which this future could be obtained became KW's last message to Baptists world-wide as BWA president: 'Love one another, because love won another!'<sup>40</sup>

#### **4. 'I believe in God, the Father..., in Jesus Christ..., and in the Holy Spirit...'**

##### **The Apostles' Creed, about 200**

*'Jeg tror på Gud, Faderen..., på Jesus Kristus... og på Helligånden...'*

In this last section I look more closely at KW's theology. To Danish Baptist life, KW became one of a pair of twins, the other being the minister who challenged KW about a life dedicated for ministry, K. Kyrø-Rasmussen (KKR). Being of the same age and mind, they supplemented each other splendidly – KW having the pastoral, representative and administrative ministry, KKR being a provocative theologian, a journalist and the Union's representative in ecumenical bodies at home and abroad.<sup>41</sup> In theological terms their ministries became a joint venture, only with different profiles – KW wrapped in diplomacy, KKR in provocative nakedness!

KW began his theological training in Tølløse, in the days of Johannes Nørgaard's presidency at the Baptist Theological Seminary. Here he was influenced by teachers such as J. Nørgaard (a Barthian approach to theology) and Bredahl Petersen (church history) – both of them engaged deeply in studies of Baptist life and heritage. After five years of ministry KW and his family went to the United States for further education, 1952-54. Karen and Knud had obtained scholarships from the World Council of Churches and the Fullbright Fund. Their stay was planned in co-operation with the (then) American Baptist Convention, and they chose Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City – first of all in order to get a chance to become acquainted with both Northern and Southern Baptists.

At Central Seminary KW got credit for most of his studies in Denmark, so he was able to graduate with a Bachelor of Divinity (BD) in 1953 and a Master of Religious Education (MRD) in 1954. In order to

<sup>40</sup> *Baptist World*, 4/1995, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> K.Kyrø-Rasmussen, 1920-86, was pastor in Copenhagen from 1955, as was KW, and from 1970 he became pastor of the congregation in Tølløse, where KW lived from 1979. KKR was the representative to The Ecumenical Council in Denmark (1954-86) and to The World Council of Churches to which the Danish Baptist Union belonged from the time of the formation of the WCC in 1948. KKR was also a member of the Union's Executive Committee in the years 1955-68.



provide for their needs during their stay, KW preached almost every Sunday. During a season of holidays they toured the States and visited the congregations of the Danish Baptist General Conference of America.<sup>42</sup> The years in the States became an opportunity for a broader perspective both theologically and experientially.

Enriched by studies and experiences, KW returned to Denmark in order to implement his new insights. As a minister he entered the field of religious education for adults and especially young teenagers of fourteen, his material being tested by some pastors before it was published. In the introduction KW told about his intention – to create a clear understanding of the main points of the Christian faith in order to show the importance of a clear decision for a lifelong journey with Christ. The book appeared as a catechetical interpretation of the Apostles' Creed.<sup>43</sup> KW's book was used for a generation and was a breakthrough in appreciation of the Apostles' Creed among Danish Baptists.<sup>44</sup> This approach to Christian faith became typical for KW's understanding of the task of theology. It must interpret life in the light of God's Trinitarian mission in the world – as Creator and Sustainer, as Saviour and Lord, and as Spirit and Fulfiller. Thus KW introduced into the Danish Baptist Union what Dr Alexander Maclaren did in the BWA fellowship in London in 1905.<sup>45</sup>

At the same time KKR published his book on Baptist ecclesiology.<sup>46</sup> Here he reflected upon controversial points of ecclesiology, bringing ecumenical challenges to Danish Baptists. He argued for the unity of Christians from all denominations and raised the question of 'open' or 'transferred membership' for believers baptised as infants, i.e. an open ecumenical Baptist policy in a Lutheran setting.<sup>47</sup> To ensure unity among Baptist churches exhibiting considerable diversity, KKR argued for the necessity of a ministry which takes care of the whole Union – an 'episkopé'

<sup>42</sup> KW was later honoured with different degrees: At William Jewell College, Liberty, Missouri, 1985 (Doctor of Divinity); at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas, 1985 (Distinguished Service Award); and at Baptist Theological Seminary, Rüschlikon-Zürich, Switzerland, 1991 (Scroll of Honour).

<sup>43</sup> Knud Wümpelmann: *Vi tror* [We confess], 88 pages (Aalborg, 1966).

<sup>44</sup> At the same time KKR was a member of an ecumenical group planning a service in Copenhagen. Here he had to tell Lutherans that many Baptists would not participate in an ecumenical service if the Apostles' Creed became part of the liturgy. See *Baptist Weekly*, 26/1966. A generation later (in 1989) Danish Baptists published a new hymnbook where the Apostles' Creed is printed for liturgical use!

<sup>45</sup> Walter B. Shurden (Ed): *The Life of Baptists in the Life of the World* (Broadman Press, 1985), p. 17. Dr A. Maclaren, in his presidential message, asked the auditorium of Baptists to stand and say the Apostles' Creed to show that Baptists stood 'in the continuity of the historic church' and 'what we believe'.

<sup>46</sup> Kjell Kyrø-Rasmussen: *Hvad skal vi med kirken?* [What is the Church Good for?], 160 pages (Aalborg, 1967).

<sup>47</sup> KW's introduction to an 'open Baptist' approach goes back to a conference on baptism for Scandinavian Baptist theologians in 1956. Here he was attracted by the baptismal theology of Torsten Bergsten, similar to KKR's theology of baptism. Torsten Bergsten's paper was entitled 'Dopet och församlingen' [Baptism and the Church], published in *Dopet - Däben - Däpen* (Stockholm, 1957), pp. 5-23.

function. Today KW admits that this position was his as well as KKR's – and he himself looked upon his ministry as General Secretary much the same way as it was described in KKR's theology.<sup>48</sup> The 'twins' worked together – KKR challenging the tradition, KW building bridges.

Accordingly, you cannot put KW into one theological box and put a label on him. From his upbringing he knew the ecumenical, the charismatic and the evangelical dimensions of the Gospel. He took his stance for what he had experienced and expounded this in his theological thinking and ministry. His point was always to keep the balance – a personal warm commitment to Christ (evangelical)<sup>49</sup>, ready to receive the power as God's gift for ministry (charismatic)<sup>50</sup>, but always with openness and sensitivity for the present need (ecumenical).<sup>51</sup> His ministry of 'episkopé' became known world-wide for its emphasis on individuals, congregations, unions, Christ's church as such, and the integrity of creation.

An expressive example of KW's ability to implement theological reflection in church life with the perspective of world-wide ministry was experienced in the year of European turmoil and changes, i.e. 1968. KKR had been the delegate of the Danish Baptist Union at the WCC's Assembly in Uppsala. In the Danish Missionary Council KW had worked with the theme from Uppsala, that 'the world writes the agenda of the church'. Knowing what challenges the Baptists needed, the 'twins' asked the Executive Committee to make the Annual Conference of the Union a channel for implementing the WCC's perspective of ministry. Therefore, the chosen theme for the Baptist Annual Meeting in the autumn of 1968 became 'The field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom' (Matt. 13:38) – and KKR became the main speaker, presenting three Bible studies.<sup>52</sup>

In the 1970s KW kept the Union on the classical theology of mission. In autumn 1973 he participated in a post-Bangkok Conference on mission in Helsinki. When he came back he wrote: 'Mission is to proclaim Christ for salvation – there is no other name in which we can be saved. Salvation means restoring the broken lives of human beings – both physically and spiritually – in the eschatological perspective of hope about

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<sup>48</sup> See KKR, op. cit., pp. 91ff. In written form part of KW's 'episkopé' function as General Secretary was his 'Manual for Baptist Ministers', 1977.

<sup>49</sup> KW was a member of the steering committee for Billy Graham's crusade in Copenhagen in 1965. He wrote: 'A personal invitation is much more effective than is advertisement', *Baptist Weekly*, 19/1965.

<sup>50</sup> In the EBF, too, KW was spokesman for the charismatic dimensions of the Gospel, see KW: 'The EBF and the Charismatic Movement', op. cit., pp. 36ff, and Bernard Green, *Crossing*, p. 72.

<sup>51</sup> 'Oikoumene' for KW always meant 'the whole inhabited earth', the world for which God cares. Therefore, the church has to be engaged for the benefit of all.

<sup>52</sup> See BY 1968, pp. 51ff, and BY 1969, pg. 17. KKR's studies were later published as *Evangelisation uden bekymring* [Evangelisation without Anxiety] (København, 1969).

all things re-established, but also inspiration to act for the benefit of man in the waiting time'.<sup>53</sup> A few years before, KW had edited a booklet on Baptist mission in Rwanda and Burundi in which he argued for a holistic and participatory approach in mission understood in categories of preaching, teaching, healing, charity<sup>54</sup> and justice.<sup>55</sup> KW's position as a competent theologian was justified when he was appointed as the BWA staff representative to the Baptist-Lutheran Bilateral Commission – working on ecclesiology – 1986-89.<sup>56</sup>

KW's theological perspective can also be found in his 'presidential reports' to the BWA Councils. In 1992 he pointed to the following three dimensions of a holistic BWA ministry: the need for world evangelisation including the continent of Europe; the need for help to people who are suffering from war and catastrophes such as drought and floods and for peace with justice and reconciliation; and the need of mutual sharing and partnership in all fields of mission and church life.<sup>57</sup> In theological terms he spoke of *kerygma*, *diakonia* and *koinonia* being different parts of the one Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Being aware of the value of good communication, KW also stressed this holistic approach in ministry in his 'pastoral letters' to the churches. He spoke of global evangelism beginning at the personal and local level; of fellowship understood as unity in diversity with a focus on spiritual and economic partnership; of the need for a world-wide witness in deeds; of the love of Christ for all people expressed through aid; and finally of the responsibility of Baptists to be a prophetic voice speaking for religious freedom, peace and justice. KW never made theoretical statements about priorities among these aspects of mission – priorities in mission always come to God's people as a call from the context in which the church has to serve God's kingdom.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> BY 1974, pp. 97f.

<sup>54</sup> Knud Wümpelmann published, in 1978, an article with this title: 'Aid is also Mission'. See *Nyt Synspunkt* 7, Hellerup 1978, pp. 28-34. Here he argues that biblically relief work is part of the church's mission: 'Jesus said *both*: 'Go therefore and make disciples' (Matt.28:19) *and* - with reference to The Good Samaritan - 'Go and do likewise' (Luke 10:37). And Jesus demonstrated with his example, that the two functions belong together'. See also Bernard Green, *Crossing*, pp. 93f.

<sup>55</sup> Knud Wümpelmann (Ed): *Baptistsamfundene Rwanda & Burundi* [Baptist Unions in Rwanda & Burundi], 50 pages, Aalborg 1968. See also BY 1978, p. 77, where world-wide aid is mentioned as part of holistic mission. In an interview in 1977, KW, nominated as President of EBF, stressed the dimension of justice: 'Christians have an obligation to speak of political questions and to be in the forefront in order to prepare the way for justice. It was a serious mistake that we misused our opportunity to fight for righteousness. Deeds of charity are not enough.' *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 22.12.1977.

<sup>56</sup> 'Baptists and Lutherans in Conversation', BWA-LWF 1990. This document was translated and published in Denmark in 1992: *Budskab til vore kirker* [Message for our Churches].

<sup>57</sup> PRAB 1993, pp. 35f.

<sup>58</sup> *Baptist World* 4/1991, p. 15.

It is significant that it was during KW's presidency that the BWA's member-churches agreed upon three different covenants, i.e. 'The Seoul Covenant' (1990) on world evangelism (the personal commitment to Christ); 'The Derbyshire Declaration' (1992) with its call to establish new churches (the fellowship of believers); and 'The Harare Declaration' (1993) dealing with the condemnation of the sin of racism (action for signs of reconciliation).

## Conclusion:

In this article I have given only an introduction to the life and ministry of Knud Wümpelmann. Included in the footnotes are KW's books and articles which have been published. In his files KW has many unpublished manuscripts, which have not been used for this paper. KW's papers will be kept in the archives of the Danish Baptist Union. What I have presented is, however, the essence of KW's understanding of his life and ministry. This began with his baptism – believer's baptism understood as an 'ordination for mission'. Accordingly, believer's baptism interpreted as 'dedication for ministry' became the pattern of KW's life among Baptists – in Denmark and all over the world. Originally, he was educated to become a Post & Telegraph-employee, and this was – in the Pauline understanding of office – what he really became: KW became 'a letter ... written on our hearts to be known and read by all, ... a letter of Christ ... written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God'.<sup>59</sup> God was able! – Glory to God for Knud Wümpelmann's ministry among us!

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<sup>59</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:2-3.

# THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IN THE CONTEXT OF LITHUANIAN EVANGELICALS

## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore and analyse the tradition of spiritual direction, or rather the absence of it, in the context of Lithuanian Baptist churches that are living through a period of post-Communist reality. My reflections are set in the framework of Thomas B. Turner's assessment of spiritual direction,

Spiritual direction offers guidance in the practice of prayer for people who are drawn to communion with God and want to grow in the grace and knowledge of God. It enables them to discern the presence of God and respond with trust to the movement of God's Spirit in their lives. It is a distinctive form of pastoral care, theological education, supervision, and Christian friendship that brings them together in a unique and powerful way by focusing on prayer.<sup>1</sup>

The first part of the paper deals with the history of spiritual direction in the Christian churches. In the second part, I set out to compare and contrast the discourse, viewing the role and tasks of a pastor and a spiritual director as it has developed in the Lithuanian context. Thirdly, I look at the place of community in spiritual guidance and also engage with some of my personal experience.

## 1. The Roots

Probably the richest resource in understanding the beginnings of the tradition of spiritual directing is *Apophthegmata*<sup>2</sup> or *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. In these manuscripts the fatherly figure or *abba* emerges in the role of a person who is assigned a task of being a teacher and a counsellor to those who belong to the community.

This was partly due to the excessive conduct in the search for a deeper spiritual experience that some of the community members were absorbed in. Partly it was a natural development in that the growing congregations of the primitive monastic movement required both a clearer order and also some form of education for those who would join the community. 'The elder said, "Go, attach yourself to a man, who fears God,

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<sup>1</sup> Gary A. Furr and Curtis W. Freeman (eds.), 'Spiritual Direction and the Baptist Tradition' in *Ties That Bind: Life Together in the Baptist Vision* (Macon: Smyth & Helvys, 1994), p. 99.

<sup>2</sup> From here on italics will be used to signify the international origin of words, as a bibliographical tool or to emphasise the significance of the words to the particular context.

humble yourself before him, and then you will receive consolation from God.”<sup>3</sup>

Kenneth Leech suggests that the ‘discernment of the spirits’ or understanding of the state of the human soul was an essential part of the function of spiritual direction from the very beginning,<sup>4</sup> with prayer being another important element. Those who sought for spiritual guidance almost always were concerned with the issues of prayer, its meaning and power.<sup>5</sup> Another important feature was the vertical model of spiritual directing. The younger and less experienced Christians were encouraged to seek to be guided and taught by a more mature *abba*. These practices had a formative influence in the churches of the Middle Ages and, up to this day, in the major Christian traditions of both East and West.

There is no doubt that the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church have never lost the tradition of spiritual guidance as an inseparable part of their theology and communal practice. Most of the literature used in this essay is also a heritage of these spiritual traditions of East and West. Therefore a more extensive treatment of the shape and place of spiritual directing in these traditions may not be needed. It is worth mentioning, though, how Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches have shaped the legacy of the Desert Fathers in their own way.

Thus, in the practice of spiritual directing, Eastern Orthodoxy, in its mystical tradition, concentrated more on the role of the Holy Spirit and on certain forms of prayer. One example is the so-called ‘Jesus Prayer’,<sup>6</sup> sometimes involving certain physical exercises such as special breathing, which had not to be used without a supervisor as it may have resulted in damage to one’s health.<sup>7</sup>

The Russian Orthodox Church developed a certain rank of spiritual leaders that were called *startsy* or elders. These spiritual leaders were very much concerned with ‘acquiring the Holy Spirit’. This was their primary consideration as they realised their responsibility for the souls of so many people who came to learn the ways of God and be led ‘by and into the Spirit’.<sup>8</sup> In a less mystical way we could probably call it ‘an enlightenment

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<sup>3</sup> Cited in Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend: A Study of Spirituality* (London: Sheldon Press, 1977), p. 42.

<sup>4</sup> *Soul Friend*, p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>6</sup> “In Eastern Christianity, a mental invocation of the name of Jesus Christ, considered most efficacious when repeated continuously. The most widely accepted form of the prayer is ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me’. It reflects the biblical idea that the name of God is sacred and that its invocation implies a direct meeting with the divine.” ‘Jesus Prayer’, Britannica CD, Version 98© 1994-1997. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc.

<sup>7</sup> *Soul Friend*, p. 46.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 48.

by the Spirit', a spiritual maturity that brings a person into a deeper knowledge of a human soul and the proper ways to work with it.

The Roman Catholic Church had a more legal and ordered effect upon the development of spiritual direction. Confession was the key element introduced into the tradition of the Desert Fathers. It gradually became a necessary part of every spiritual guidance encounter, with more power of absolution and penitence given to the priests and *abbots*.<sup>9</sup> It is also true that this discipline, at least until St. Bernard of Clairvoux, was encapsulated in the *regulas* of the multiple monastic orders. It has somewhat lost the initial notion of a freewill act, encouraged by the voluntary community of 'desert spiritualists'.

For the Roman Catholic tradition, St. Ignatius of Loyola was a key figure. His input in the Western tradition of spiritual direction is so significant that it requires separate treatment. *The Spiritual Exercises*, his *magnum opus* on the practice of spiritual directing, is the formative source of many schools of spirituality, even to this day. In his *Spiritual Exercises*, first published in 1548, Loyola introduced the concept of spiritual retreats; indeed the book mainly constitutes a manual for those who were organising them. Alister McGrath gives a handy summary of the key ideas of Loyola's work.<sup>10</sup>

Firstly, those who attended such a retreat were encouraged to be engaged in the imaginative reading of the Bible, in forming mental images as an aid to prayer and meditation. Secondly, it was a systematic approach to reflection and meditation on major topics of the Christian life, such as sin and its implications, life and the death of Christ, and the Resurrection. Thirdly, the role of a retreat director was defined as strictly *enabling* people to engage in self-reflection and self-evaluation, leading to reforming and renewing decision-making without exercising the direct influence of the leader.<sup>11</sup>

This last element of the spiritual directing process became formative for a different school of, or approach to, spiritual directing that emerged in some radical traditions both inside and outside the Roman Catholic tradition, such as the sixteenth-century Anabaptists.

Historically, in the early Anabaptist movement, from 1525 onwards, the concept of spiritual direction was understood as mutual discipleship rather than 'spiritual meditation'. Despite this, I believe that the underlying core of this practice in the Anabaptist tradition can easily lend support to using these terms interchangeably. One of the earliest Anabaptists,

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>10</sup> *Christian Spirituality: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999), pp. 160-62.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

Cornelius J. Dyck, aptly observed that ‘Anabaptist discipleship meant placing all of life under the lordship of Christ, not simply in imitation but also participation with him. It also meant studying the Scripture together in small groups to discern the will of God, to admonish, support and encourage each other in community’.<sup>12</sup>

The call to discipleship, or *Nachfolge*, was one of the most prominent themes in the Anabaptist movement. It was always placed together with such important theological reflections as separation of church and state, the free will of a believer, the sense of mission, and other elements of discipleship. Obviously *Nachfolge* spirituality was a communal practice rather than a one-to-one supervision-like relationship as among the Desert Fathers or in the Medieval churches. It was a mutual enterprise when the entire community was involved in the discernment of the spirit and will of Christ by the means of prayer, meditation, and even suffering, which was so common in the lives of Anabaptists.

The early Anabaptists, in their *Nachfolge* practice, were concerned with the reformation of the inner man as much as those who were practising spiritual direction before them. The difference, however, from the major Church traditions was that the Anabaptists applied this requirement for transformation to their local communities. They clearly discerned the role of the congregation, not simply of separate individuals, in this ‘pursuit of holiness’ to which God is calling his people. The church was the community where the process of spiritual growth and reformation could truly take place.

Turner points out the same reasons why today’s mainly Catholic and Orthodox spiritual practice should find its way into the Baptist communities – it is a practice that stresses prayer and reformation. He asks: ‘What need for direction is indicated by the view of church that animates the Baptist tradition?’ His answer is: ‘At the heart of our tradition is the conviction that the church stands in need of reform – radical reform that involves an ongoing, ever-renewed, and unending process of guiding the church to be the church.’<sup>13</sup>

## 2. Lithuanian Context

After exploring, in a limited way, the history of spiritual direction, I will now turn to look at the context in which this paper is written. Throughout the oppression in the Communist period the Lithuanian Roman Catholic

<sup>12</sup> *Spiritual Life in Anabaptism* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 1995), p. 86.

<sup>13</sup> *Ties That Bind*, p. 99. For additional support for this view of the need for continuous radical reformation of the church see Darrel L. Guder’s *The Continuing Conversion of the Church* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), p.145.



Church remained the most powerful church structure in the country. The authorities had to respect the Church and take into account the fact that in such a traditionally conservative culture as Lithuania any assault on the Church could have caused significant troubles. Thus, after independence from the Soviet Union in 1990, the Catholic Church almost instantly resumed all its previous authority, privileges and power in society. This return has put the Catholic Church in a respectable position in all spheres of life, from the army to the shipbuilding industry.

These changes were also reflected in the spiritual life of this largest Christian denomination. In particular, Franciscan monasteries became visible on the landscape of Catholic spirituality. The Franciscans have restored and made available an old monastery on the west coast of the country, just about twenty kilometres from my hometown. Today it is an important spiritual centre influencing the entire region. I have heard several testimonies of people who have been converted there in the youth camps and retreats organised by Franciscan brethren.

Another recently built monastery in the east of the country opened its doors to those who were seeking a meaning to life through solitude and prayer in community. Different denominations in that city maintain close contacts with this Franciscan monastery and engage in weekly prayer meetings and regular retreats. This is one of many examples of how, in the post-Communist period, the Roman Catholic Church experienced a revival in the practices of spiritual direction.

At the same time, Lithuanian evangelicals never had the chance to enjoy a period of peace and democracy to establish their own biblical patterns of 'leading the flock'. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century to 1990, Lithuanian Protestants and radical movements of all sorts suffered the cruel counterreformation led by the Jesuits. For centuries they were either persecuted or abhorred by this hostile dominant church. They suffered under landlords of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, Russian occupants, the Lithuanian dictatorial government from 1918-1940, and finally were suppressed by the Communist regime whose utmost desire was to establish a religion-free society. These developments resulted specifically in the formation of a strongly mono-pastoral form of leadership in the Baptist churches, partially conditioned by one-person representation of the Baptist churches in all issues involved in church and state relationships.

Thus, exploring the nature of spiritual directing in Lithuania, we may observe that care for spiritual life in the Baptist congregations simply became one of the many responsibilities of a pastor in every aspect of congregational life. These responsibilities include such areas as finance, maintenance, general administration, and also tasks traditionally described

as being pastoral. However, even such pastoral tasks as counselling, spiritual care, and teaching are often based on wishful perceptions rather than biblical teaching or even practical circumstances. One such popular perception is that the spiritual life and guidance of the community is the sole responsibility of a pastor, as the one who is educated and receives a stipend – ‘a professional’.

Again, we can look for insights to the tradition of the early Reformation, namely the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. This New Testament understanding was recovered in the Reformation period and brought out by both early Anabaptist and the Baptist movements. According to John T. McNeill,

The favourite reform doctrine of the priesthood of all Christians encouraged mutual or group procedures in guidance. They have not always been given recognisable organised form, but the principle has found notable expression in Pietism, Methodism, and Quakerism, and in the Reformed, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches.<sup>14</sup>

The point of this Reformation discovery was to shift the emphasis in the task of spiritual directing in the church from an institutionalised one to one where the entire community is involved, caring and taking responsibility for each member in the community. McNeill continues: ‘The Baptist heritage lies with those segments of the Protestant expression best known for insisting upon informal mutual guidance and community decision-making’.<sup>15</sup>

Even the slightest inquiry into the Scriptures and Baptist tradition points out the misconceptions about the role of the pastor as it has developed in the Soviet evangelical movement. The inability of a pastor, working with this model, to take part in the exercise of spiritual directing is obvious.

### **3. Spiritual Directing: Community and Companionship**

Richard Foster, in his well-known work on spiritual disciplines, *Celebration of Discipline*, lists some major aspects of what he calls spiritual guidance. Because of his denominational background as a Quaker he is concentrating on the corporate or communal aspect in the tradition of spiritual directing. He writes, ‘God does guide individuals richly and profoundly, but He also guides groups of people and can instruct the individual through the group experience’.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, Foster is convinced

<sup>14</sup> *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper and Row, 1951.) Cited by Wm L. Allen in his essay ‘Spiritual Discernment, the Community, and Baptists’ in *Ties That Bind*, p. 111.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>16</sup> (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1982), p. 151.

that 'individual guidance must yield to corporate guidance. [P]erhaps our preoccupation with private guidance is the product of Western individualism.'<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, 'when two or three are gathered in my name' or when a community is gathered together with true and genuine desire to understand God's will, this will can be discerned. In this seemingly simple idea I would like to point out a couple of aspects that were left unnoticed or were just ignored by the generations of evangelical believers in the East (and probably also the West).

Importantly, the presence of the community is required not only in the annual or quarterly business meetings to hear the reports of the pastor and the administration but also in the matters of faith and spirit. Too often the pastor is an *abba* in the community, solely guiding the congregation in the spirit. However, discerning the mind of Christ and obtaining his guidance for the community should, if Anabaptist and Baptist insights are followed, be the business of the entire community and not only selected leaders.<sup>18</sup> The book of Acts points towards this model of spiritual directing, in chapter fifteen in particular. In this we should not underestimate the value of community involvement in such spiritual exercises that are immensely supportive to the consolidation and maturity of God's people on the road of sanctification. It is a way to build healthy relationships within the community and a sense of responsibility that is owned by its individual members.

Another major aspect of the tradition of spiritual directing is the model of companionship. The idea behind this model of spiritual directing is in the need to have a 'friend'. The role of this friend is to enable both friends to walk together and learn the ways of prayer, both as a means and an end in the process of Christian maturity and knowledge of God. We need people to talk with in the church. The Pastor cannot and should not be the only source of spiritual encouragement for every person in every situation. Answering the question, why do we need companionship in our spiritual life, another Christian writer confesses, 'I need, from time to time, the disarming and probing mind of a spiritual director who will help me see who my true friends are and who are my real enemies in my interior life. A spiritual guide helps me pay attention to the biblical imperative: 'Be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy' (Lev. 19:2).'<sup>19</sup> This confession, I believe, is applicable to every member of the congregation. I am convinced that it is difficult to have a healthy spiritual life without encouragement and

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp.150-1.

<sup>18</sup> For more details see John Howard Yoder, *The Fullness of Christ* (Elgin: Brethren Press, 1987).

<sup>19</sup> Alan Jones, *Exploring Spiritual Direction: an Essay on Christian Friendship* (Minnesota: Winston Press Inc., 1982), p. 13.

challenge from someone who knows us more than at a 'Sunday-church-fellowship' level.

This model of spiritual directing, with its apparent encouragement to share in the problems of others, is most commonly confused with pastoral counselling. However, pastoral counselling bears a therapeutic connotation and is a different form of guidance in the church. Turner gives a short clarifying statement on this issue: 'Spiritual direction does not focus on analysing or solving problems [...]. Rather it centers on the awareness of God, and its goal is a healthy practice of prayer that draws on the full resources of Christian faith, hope, and love to form in people the maturity of Christ.'<sup>20</sup> Thomas N. Hart puts it in a similar way: 'Spiritual directors [d]eal not so much with problems [psychological ones – L.A.], as with progress, progress in the spiritual life. You talk with them about specialised human experiences – prayer, religious vocation, temptations, delusions, apostolic interests.'<sup>21</sup> Pastoral counselling is a necessary part of church life and pastoral ministry. The aims and objectives of each practice, though, is as different as different are the needs of people.

As so often happens, the spark of writing comes with personal experience. My encounter, about two years ago, with a person (an American Presbyterian) who has ultimately become my spiritual director, led me to consider sharing some of this story in the pages that follow. Quite soon after the ramp-lights of the baptismal service were turned off, I realised that things were not working out as well as I had expected. Crisis followed. My pastor, community and even denomination seemed to have failed my expectations of finding an answer to the 'what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-Christian-anyway' question. My problems started with small and insignificant things and finally grew into a major disappointment with the church, individual people and even God. The answer came outside the existing patterns of Christian life in a closed community. The prerequisite, however, was a need to conquer some ghosts that prevented me from seeking help by crossing the pre-set boundaries.

The first ghost was convictions that assumed that salvation is not to be sought outside my own church. The second ghost was fear of ecumenical encounter, which could presume that your own denomination might not have all the answers to the Big Questions of life. The third ghost was an ethnical problem and the issue of language. (Western Christians were often considered as the ones who 'compromised their faith' in the face of Western secularism). Finally, the fourth ghost was an enigma attached to the ways of dealing with spiritual problems in the church. I

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<sup>20</sup> *Ties That Bind*, p. 105.

<sup>21</sup> *The Art of Christian Listening* (Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1980), p. 27.

realised that I lacked the very vocabulary to express myself in cognitive terms, and I found others struggling with the same problem. This enigma presupposed shame about experiencing difficulties and a fear of sharing them with others in case this called into question your Christian progress towards sanctification.

Such dichotomous approach to the realities of Christian life brings about many sad consequences in the life of the Baptist community. One of the tasks of spiritual directing would be to address, in the life of individuals, this very problem of inner division that leads, not only to poor Christian witness, but also is harmful to the wholeness of Christian personhood. The sacrificial death of Christ gives value to the efforts to make this life of human beings meaningful and whole. Hence the task of spiritual direction is to carry forward the great comfort of *shalom* that Christ was concerned with when he was healing, teaching, loving and caring for the disciples, his own community, and the people around.

## Conclusion

Spiritual direction is a long developed and cherished part of Christian spirituality. It is clear that there are no reasons for the post-Soviet Evangelicals to shun and stigmatise this practice, for the roots of it lay, not only in Catholic and Orthodox practice, but also in the Radical or Early Anabaptist tradition to which, I believe, contemporary Baptists rightfully belong.<sup>22</sup> Apart from this, we need spiritual directing because we are people prone to failure, a failure that can be exacerbated by our personal and communal histories. We need this help both as community and individually.

As social beings we need friends, and especially in our spiritual journey. We need them to proof-read our convictions, expectations and values. We need them to walk this difficult path of holiness we are called to by God. 'Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up (Ecclesiastes 4: 9-10, RSV).'

Finally, spiritual guidance is based on the discernment of the mind and will of God together in order to shape the spiritual life. It does not have to depend upon the will or capabilities of certain people who may hold clerical offices in the church. Every believer in community is called to be

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. James Wm. McClendon, Jr., *Systematic Theology: Ethics* 3 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), vol. I. and the historical survey of primary witnesses by Curtis W. Freedman, James Wm. McClendon, Jr. and C. Rosalee Velloso da Silva, *Baptist Roots* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1999).

involved in this practice of spiritual directing either as the one who is led or the one who leads.

Unfortunately, the pastoral institution as it has developed in the tradition of Soviet Evangelicals is still preventative of spiritual directing being freely and fruitfully practised in our communities. The role of a pastor as an enabler still has a long way to go. Before this happens pastors have to be free from the self-imposed burden of responsibility, for the congregation, as a community, has to be free from fear to have a say in discerning the mind of Christ.

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## BAPTIST ORIGINS AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT IN MOLDOVA

### Introduction

The appearance of Baptists in the southern provinces of Russia dates from the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A. I. Klibanov writes: 'In the beginning of the 70s [1870s] the Baptist groups emerged in Podolia province; in the second part of the 70s in some places in Ekaterinoslav, Tavria, and Bessarabia provinces.'<sup>1</sup> The history of the Baptists in Bessarabia/Moldova is not written only by themselves, but by the whole context of that time. Among the factors that helped to produce the Baptist movement were the spiritual revival among the German colonists in Bessarabia, the decline of the Orthodox Church's influence on the people, the geopolitical interests from Russia and Romania (politically this area changed several times from one side to another), the deep religiosity of the Bessarabians, the wave of pogroms against the Jews (1881-1882) in Kishinev, and the strong evangelistic zeal of new believers in the emerging Baptist churches. J. Cocutz, a pastor and general secretary of the Baptist Union of Romania, spoke in this way in 1939: 'The Baptists of Bessarabia.... are one of the most interesting groups of the Baptists of the world.'<sup>2</sup> As he and others saw it, one special feature was the remarkable growth of the Baptist churches in Bessarabia. A report in 1940 noted: 'Only 42 believers in 1918, and almost 14,000 in 1940 – this cannot be duplicated easily in any part of the world.'<sup>3</sup>

In this study of the Baptist story in Moldova I have tried to compile and understand the history of the Baptists mainly by using the many primary sources now available that have some direct connection with Baptist developments in Bessarabia/Moldova, but also by looking at the changes which paralleled the Baptist story in the political, social, and economical life of Bessarabia (when it was under the Russian Empire from 1812, and from 1918 to 1940 when it was under Romania). Sources presented in this work are various: different church magazines, mission reports, autobiographies, and hostile sources. By the use of all of these I will try to answer questions such as: Where are the beginnings of the Baptist roots? Who were the people who first preached the Baptist message? What influenced the spread of Baptists?

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<sup>1</sup> A. I. Klibanov, *Istoria Religioznogo Sektantstva v Rossii* (History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia) (Moscow: Nauka, 1965) p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> J. Cocutz, 'Baptists of Bessarabia', *The Watchman-Examiner*, August 15, 1940, pp. 886-7.

<sup>3</sup> 'Bessarabia,' *Link*, No. 24 (1940), p. 3.

The geographical area researched in the present paper has been known by different names: Bessarabia, Moldavia and Moldova. From 1940 Bessarabia became an autonomous republic of the Ukraine and was known as Moldavia. Later it was a separate republic of the USSR – Moldavia. From 1991 my country has been the independent country of Moldova. In 1940 the Communist government took the southern parts of Bessarabia, with the entrance to the Black Sea, and joined these to the Ukraine. From the Ukraine were taken the areas across the Dnester river and these were joined to Bessarabia. Today all of those changes contribute to the present territory of Moldova. To speak about the origins and development of Moldovan Baptists we should look at Bessarabia until 1940, and later at Moldavia or Moldova. In this study I will concentrate on the period up to the 1920s.

### **‘True Christians’: Preparing the Way**

Bessarabia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was situated between two rivers – the Dnester and the Prut. The southern border of Bessarabia (at that time Bessarabia was only a province of Russia) was the Black Sea. On the north and east there were borders with the Ukraine, and in the west there was a border with Romania. Schemchishin noted that Bessarabia shows 'the complicated conglomeration of the nations, traditions, historical features and geopolitical interests of great empires.'<sup>4</sup> Let us look at some important facts about its history on the eve of the appearance of Baptists. After the Russian-Turkish War (1806-1812) Bessarabia saw waves of settlements (1809-1812, 1828-1829) as Gagauses (Christian Turks) and Bulgarians (refugees from Bulgaria during Turkish occupation) were invited in by the Russian Government.<sup>5</sup> Then many people from the Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox Churches, encouraged by the Russian Government, settled in Bessarabia. This mixture of nations, customs and traditions contributed to an unstable political situation (with revolutionary ideas) at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. An increasingly secularised intelligentsia tried to reform the Orthodox Church,<sup>6</sup> and also westernise Russia. The Orthodox Church was often ridiculed for its poor moral standards and its materialistic religiosity. Doubts among the Bessarabians about the Church prepared the soil for Baptist teaching to appear, be accepted and spread. In addition, Gajos, the Moldovan historian, argued in

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<sup>4</sup> V. P. Schemchishin, *The Origins and Development of Evangelical Baptist Movement in Bessarabia*, PhD thesis, Kiev Theological Seminary, 1998, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Y. Reshetnikov and S. Sannikov, *Obzor Istorii Evangelisko-basptistskogo bratstva na Ukraine* (Historical Research of Evangelical Baptist Brotherhood in Ukraine), (Odessa: Bogamyslie, 2000) p. 153.

<sup>6</sup> See Nicolas Zernov, *The Russian Religious Renaissance of the Twentieth Century* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1963).



1975 that the appearance of the sects (he includes Baptists)<sup>7</sup> in Bessarabia was a reaction to 'class' exploitation and national oppression, led by the tsar.<sup>8</sup>

The appearance of Baptists in Bessarabia/Moldova also owes much to religious revival among Germans in the region. As McBeth put it: 'Baptists on the Continent took their rise from the wave of Pietist awakenings that swept Europe after 1800.'<sup>9</sup> These Pietist groups, which emphasised reading the Bible, personal faith, and prayer and meditation, were especially to be found in the German Colonies in Bessarabia. These colonies were established in the southern provinces of Russia at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the initiative of Catherine the Great, when Catholics, Lutherans, and Mennonites were invited to settle and were given freedom from major taxes. After the Patriotic War of Russia against Napoleon's army (1812), pietistic Germans came to Bessarabia. At the beginning their life was quite separate from that of the Bessarabians; then the Germans began to hire Bessarabians for work. It was in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that the Pietists who settled in Bessarabia brought new ideas for the reforming of the German churches. They put new stress on the reading of the Bible and prayer, they raised the question of baptism, and they especially emphasised missionary zeal. This movement, often called Stundism, as its fuller name – *Bibelstunde* (biblical hour) – implies, was known because of the time members devoted to the Bible and prayer. However, the Stundists did not practice believer's baptism. They shared with the Molokans a more 'spiritual' interpretation of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

William Schauffler, an evangelical missionary to Jews and Turks, speaks in his autobiography about the 1820s when 'divine truth and vital godliness began to take root in that part of Russia.'<sup>10</sup> By 'that part' he means Odessa and Bessarabia. In Bavaria, a Roman Catholic missionary, Ignaz Lindl, and his associate, named Gossner, were persecuted and imprisoned 'by reason of their evangelical views',<sup>11</sup> and Alexander I asked the King of Bavaria for permission for them to move to Russia. Lindl went to Russia and began to preach in German in St. Petersburg. Persecuted by Catholics there, he then moved to south Russia, with a desire to 'make a settlement of true Christians in Bessarabia....'<sup>12</sup> Schauffler, from a Lutheran background, experienced an evangelical conversion through Lindl

<sup>7</sup> See V. F. Gajos, *Evolutia Religiosnogo Sectantstva v Moldaviy* (The Evolution of Religious Sectarianism in Moldova), (Kishinev: Stiintsa, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> Gajos, *Evolutia Religiosnogo Sectantstva v Moldaviy*, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> H. Leon McBeth, *A Sourcebook for Baptist Heritage* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990) p. 347.

<sup>10</sup> William G. Schauffler, *Autobiography of William Schauffler, for Forty-Nine Years a Missionary in the Orient* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Company, 1887) p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

and (to his own surprise) Schauffler regarded Lindl, a Roman Catholic, as his spiritual father. Other revivalist preachers in Bessarabia included John Saltet, a Jewish missionary with the Basle Missionary Institute, and a Moravian called Koch. From 1822, Sarata, a village of Germans across the Dnester River from Odessa, became the centre of Lindl's preaching and of a pietistic revival. Schauffler remembers: 'It was almost millennial...the whole congregation broke down; they wept, they sobbed, they almost shrieked....'.<sup>13</sup> After their conversion, believers travelled and preached. One report speaks of a Bessarabian German on a sea trip who communicated with Russians for several hours, although he had never learned Russian and his hearers did not know German. This was seen as the Pentecostal gift of tongues – '*Pfingstwunder des Redens in fremden Zungen*'.<sup>14</sup> Was this glossolalia in the 1870s in Bessarabia – long before Pentecostalism appeared? Certainly Stundism, among Bessarabians, was a 'cradle' of *Baptist* ideas.

Another group of Baptists in Bessarabia emerged from the Molokan communities ('milk-drinkers' – probably a name that referred to their rejection of the Orthodox Church fasts or possibly to their desire for the 'pure milk' of the Word). Molokans constituted a reform movement that emphasised scripture and sought to recover the practices of the early church. They thought in terms of a 'spiritual' baptism, but many became deeply interested in Baptist views. There were large Molokan communities in the 1870s in Chichma (now Strumok, Odessa district), Akkerman (now Belgorod-Dnestrovsk) and in Kishinev, the capital of Bessarabia (now the capital of Moldova). In Kishinev, a young Molokan, Andrei Ivanov, began to read the Bible and to doubt the Molokan teaching on spiritual baptism. His mother, worried about the views of her son, went to Odessa for help. Vasily Pavlov, a Baptist who had been a Molokan, had great influence in Odessa. Ivanov's mother, thinking that Pavlov was still a Molokan, asked him to come and bring her son back to the Molokan community from his 'new' ideas. Pavlov went to Kishinev and, after speaking with Ivanov, he encouraged Ivanov to stay firmly committed to everything he had found in the Bible, including believer's baptism. This was the first appearance of Baptist ideas in Kishinev. Later Ivanov became an evangelist and spread the Baptist message in Bessarabia.

At the same time, independent of Ivanov's work, a further evangelical group emerged under the leadership of T. Khijnyakov, who was then Orthodox. He came to Bessarabia for military service and one of the local priests gave him a Bible. The words 'God is a spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth' brought him to reject many

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> 'Die Deutschen Kolonien in Sudwestrussland' in *Die Christliche Welt*, Vol. 2 (April 1886) p. 169.

teachings and traditions of the Orthodox Church. With his friends he began to gather in homes for Bible study. Around 1907, Ivanov heard about this group and they began to gather together. Pavlov and others from Odessa supported them and the first baptisms of believers took place in the Black Sea in 1908 when A. F. Ivanov, A. A. Lebedenko, and N. N. Tihomirov were baptised. Later in the same year T. Khijnyakov and his family were baptised. Thus, 1908 is seen as the year of the establishing of the Baptist community in Kishinev. Later this community became the centre of Baptist life in Bessarabia and these early Baptists in Kishinev became significant workers and leaders in the Bessarabian Baptist Union. According to reports collated in 1904 from Orthodox 'anti-sectarian' missionaries, many Molokans became Baptists in this period.<sup>15</sup> Klibanov comments that many Molokans were baptised as Baptists at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that former Molokans made up about half of the Baptists.<sup>16</sup>

A final influence was the way in which the Orthodox Church (or the wing of the Orthodox Church that demanded reform) made the Bible accessible to lay people. The Russian Bible Society, established in 1813, worked to make the Bible a household book for citizens of the Russian Empire.<sup>17</sup> On several occasions its work was stopped but finally in 1876 the Orthodox Synod's Bible in Russian was published. Then the Society began to publish Bibles in other languages. The publishing of Bibles in Moscow aroused an interest in the Bessarabian Orthodox Church to have the Bible in the Moldavian language. So, in 1814, the Orthodox Church in Bessarabia not only had the Bible in Moldavian but, moreover, established a publishing house in Kishinev, in the Eparchial House.<sup>18</sup> Gavriil Banulesco-Bodony (the Archbishop of Kishinev Eparchy) worked on the establishing of this publishing house. From 1814 to 1821 it published Bibles, New Testaments, other religious literature, and even educational books. The Orthodox Church in Bessarabia was provided with liturgical books in Romanian from the Yass publishing house (Yass being in Romania), and in the Russian language from Kiev. The problem was that although the Moldovans spoke Romanian, the script was Cyrillic, which made the Romanian religious books difficult to read. Most Moldovans, apart from the nobles, could not speak Russian. Also, 82% of them were illiterate.<sup>19</sup> The publishing was given fresh impetus by Kishinev's

<sup>15</sup> Vasily Pravedni, 'Missionerskie Besedy so Staroobreadzamy v St. Peterburge' (Missionary Conversations with Old Believers in St. Petersburg), in *Missionerskoe Obozrenie*, March, 2, 1904, pp. 730-733, p. 730.

<sup>16</sup> Klibanov, *Istoria Religioznogo Sectantstva v Rossii*, pp. 224-5.

<sup>17</sup> See Judith Cohen Zacek, 'The Russian Bible Society and the Russian Orthodox Church', in *Church History*, vol. 35 (1966) pp. 411-437.

<sup>18</sup> *Kishinevskie Eparhialnie Vedomosti* (Reports of Kishinev Eparchy), Vol. 2 (1907), (Kishinev), pp. 57-62.

<sup>19</sup> Gajos, *Evolutia Religioznogo Sectantstva v Moldaviy*, p. 4.

archbishop in 1907. Without the opportunity for Bessarabians to have the Bible in their native language the Baptist movement would never have appeared.

In conclusion, there were many different factors that had an impact on the religious life of the Bessarabians before the Baptists' emergence. Religious reforms produced openness. German Pietists gave an example of how to read the Bible, how to pray, and what changes have to take place after conversion. The Molokans turned to the New Testament and this made some embrace Baptist beliefs. Finally, though the official Orthodox Church opposed giving the Bible to the common people, the Bible became accessible and was read by those looking for the right model for the Church and its teaching.

### **'Yes, Brother, So!' – Baptists and the Bible**

There has been debate about which of these movements played the most important role in the development of ideas embodied in the Baptist movement and principles of evangelical teaching. Because of the German Baptist influence in Europe it might be thought that the natural link was with the German Mennonites in the region, some of whom were actively evangelical. For his part Klibanov emphasises the Molokans. But I want to argue for the priority of the Stundists in Bessarabia. The Stundists (*Bibelstunde*) had German origins but attracted Russians. Many German colonies covered the Bessarabia Province, from the centre to the south.<sup>20</sup> They became the areas for the appearance of Stundism and what was called Stundo-Baptism. One report stated: 'The sect of the Stundists ... increases in the localities near the German colonies. The acceptance of Stundism by Orthodox people in German colonies cannot be doubted... New Russians, through their closer ties with Germans in the colonies where Stunde meetings were opened for all visitors, very easily became Lutherans and Baptists...'.<sup>21</sup> The *Bibelstunde* opened the Word of God in accessible ways and it stopped being a mystery understood only through mediators – the Orthodox Church with its priests. Stundist approaches formed Baptist thinking.

In Chichma, the first mention of Stundists is in the 1860s. This is an important part of the story of the Bessarabian Baptists. In that area the first Baptist church of Bessarabians was established in the 1870s. Some young Molokan men, influenced by Stundism, studied the Bible and accepted the

<sup>20</sup> 'Die Evangelische Diaspora', Jgnaz Lindl. *Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Deutshen Bessarabiens*, (Leipzig, 1927) p. 8 (Appendix 1).

<sup>21</sup> Cited by S. I. Golovashenko, *Istoria evangelisko-Baptistskogo Dvijenja v Ukraine (Materailly i Documenty)* (History of Evangelical Baptists in Ukraine (Materials and Documents), (Odessa: Bogomislye, 1998) p. 16.

Lord's Supper and baptism, not only as spiritual commandments but also as visible signs. Vasily Pravedni, writing in 1904, records that this new group separated from the Molokan community and established their own community.<sup>22</sup> In 1875 Dmytri Petrov, pastor of the Baptist church in Tulchea, Romania (a Russian and German speaking church), came to Chichma and laid the foundation of the Baptist church in Chichma. It is not clear if he baptised anyone, but probably 'Baptist foundation' means the first baptisms. Orthodox missionaries called this group Stundists, Stundo-Baptists or Baptists. Pravedni records that Delyakovich (or Delyakov), Zakharovys, and a 'certain' Pavlov visited this group. Also some Germans visited and preached in Russian.<sup>23</sup> Through these contacts this group became convinced of Baptist teaching.

Leaders emerged within this community. Arkhip Romanenko was appointed as the presbyter of the Chichma church and was known to the Germans, to other evangelicals and to the Orthodox Church. There is reference to him having had correspondence with foreign 'sectarians', and a crucial reference in a report in 1900 on 'anti-sectarian' Orthodox measures in Kishinev to Romanenko (sometimes Romanyuk) having obtained 'the rank of the Presbyter through the laying on of hands from a foreign Baptist bishop'.<sup>24</sup> The title 'bishop' is no doubt a misunderstanding. What is important to note is that this Chichma Baptist church had wider 'foreign' contacts outside Bessarabia. It was part of the European Baptist family. Orthodox statistics of 1904 say that one third of the village's population of 2000 people belonged to the Molokans and to the Stundo-Baptists. The *Missionerskoe Obozrenie*, which was not a Bessarabian organ, called this group the Stundists, but in *Kishnevskie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosty* in the statistics made for the Orthodox Missionary Congress (1892) the Stundists and Baptists were mentioned separately. It was stated that Chichma had 27 Baptists and 11 Stundists.<sup>25</sup> This was, therefore, a small but important Baptist community.

From reports by Kishinev's Orthodox priests it is evident that in 1891 Stundist families were to be found in four places in the Akkerman district of Bessarabia and in three places in the Bendery.<sup>26</sup> These were to contribute to Moldovan Baptist life. According to oral history, the revival in Akkerman was around 1890, but its roots were much earlier. A German

<sup>22</sup> Pravedni, 'Missionerskie Besedy so Staroobreadzamy v St. Peterburge', p. 730.

<sup>23</sup> Pravedni, Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ieromonakh Dymytri, 'Otchet protivosektantskogo missionera Kishinevskoi eparkhy za 1900' (The Report of the anti-sectarian missionary of Kishinev's Eparchy in 1900), in *Kishinevskie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosty*, (Vol. 16, 1901), pp. 484-494, p. 486.

<sup>25</sup> 'Journal'nie postanovleniya, obscheeparkhial'nogo s'ezda deputatov otdukhovenstva Kishinevskoi' Eparkhiy, Journal No. 16, 3-17 June 1892, in *Kishinevskie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosty* (1892) pp.418-28.

<sup>26</sup> 'The Acts of the Leaders of the Parish', in *Kishinevskie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosty*, No. 5, 1892, pp. 71-73, p. 71.

Baptist church with ten members was organised there in April 1876 through the activities of the Evangelical Christians and the Baptists of the Odessa district.<sup>27</sup> It was out of this that a church with Russian people as members was formed. The date of the first meetings is not certain. Slobodenuyk testifies:

The first to believe was the mason (bricklayer) Petr Makarov, then Theodor Borisov and Ivan Schemachenko. They were local brothers. Then from Tbilisy came Panina, from Kishinev Maria Malischevski, from Bulgaria brother Randev with his big family and Velenov. Since the believers were not many, in the beginning they gathered in the Molokan's prayer house together with Molokans and separately in the house till 1912.<sup>28</sup>

Bendery, too, in the southern area of Bessarabia, had many Stundists from 1889. During the Great Orthodox Fast one old man called Adam from Kherson Province came there as 'a preacher of Stundism'. The first person who accepted Adam's teaching was Eremai Cheban, a very religious person 'who comes first to the [Orthodox] temple and is usually last to leave it'.<sup>29</sup> Though the villagers wanted to destroy his house, the meetings were not stopped. The personal evangelisation of Cheban brought his wife, relatives and others to the meetings, and after less than two years nine people became Stundists. In one source, the Orthodox priests stated that every Stundist could proselytise 'childish Russians',<sup>30</sup> but another said that sometimes 'the propagandist' (Cheban) had to work for a long time to convince his hearers.<sup>31</sup> In his preaching to them about 'worshipping God by the spirit and truth, which are absent in the Orthodox Church',<sup>32</sup> he used all his powers of persuasion. A 'Baptist from Chichma' came to hear a sermon of Cheban's and was so impressed by the biblical content that he said loudly, several times: 'Yes, Brother, So!' (it is so). It is likely that the move of this group to Baptist beliefs took place in the late 1880s. In 1892, because of his proselytising, Cheban was exiled.

The preaching of laymen like Cheban was the most important cause of the rapid growth of the Stundists and the Baptists in Bessarabia. In 1897, in *Missionerskoe Obozrenie*, the Orthodox Archimandrite Porphyri, the Rector of the Simpheropol Seminary, tried to explain the necessity of the law of 4 July 1894 that prohibited public meetings of Stundists. He asks

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<sup>27</sup> Mrs Peter Trutza, 'A Short History of Romanian Baptists' in *Chronicle*, Vol. 5 (1942), p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Schemchishin, *The Origins and Development of Evangelical Baptist Movement in Bessarabia*, p. 14.

<sup>29</sup> S. M., 'The Stundists from Bendery and short commentaries about Stundism in general and about the struggle with it' in *Kishinevskie Eparhial'nie Vedomosti*, Vol. 17, 1892, pp. 390-398. p. 390.

<sup>30</sup> Archimandrite Porphyri, 'Open letter to those puzzled why the Stundo-Baptists are recognised as an especially injurious sect and the government prohibited the liturgical-preaching meetings for its followers', in *Missionerskoe Obozrenie*, (June, 1897) pp. 455-74.

<sup>31</sup> S. M., 'The Stundists from Bendery and short commentaries about Stundism in general and about the struggle with it', p. 392.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 391.

what do people see and hear at Stundist meetings? 'Everything,' he continues 'from the first word to the last is simply 'in a familiar way'... The Holy Gospel is read in the Russian language, the sermon is preached in the commoner's language, the improvised prayer the leader reads sincerely, expressively, sweetly, and warmly, moreover he thanks God that He enlightened and regenerated them... they all sing well, and women and even children, sing heartily'.<sup>33</sup> He commented that Orthodox people had faith too, though they did not speak about it at every corner. The Chief-Procurator of the Orthodox Holy Synod, Pobedonoszev, known for his hostile attitude to Stundists, wrote in his report of 1894 and 1895 that the Stundists always had the New Testament with them, and never lost any chance to spread their heresy.<sup>34</sup> Their 'heresies' were belief that salvation was through personal faith and the reading of God's Word.<sup>35</sup> The Stundists, after the anti-Stundist law of July 1894, began to compile confessions of faith. Baptists also began to specify their beliefs. In an 1897 general census many Stundists, perhaps partly because of the anti-Stundist legislation, called themselves Baptists.<sup>36</sup>

It was in the early twentieth century that the Baptist movement in Bessarabia began to take formal shape. We have noted that 1908 is seen as the year of the establishing of the Baptist community in Kishinev. In 1912, according to Mrs Peter Trutza, a Russian Baptist church, independent of the Germans, came into existence in Akkerman. The members were Maria Malischevski, Rindi Ilii (probably Randev) and family, and Peter Naidinov and family (probably also from Bulgaria). They called themselves 'Christian Evangelists'.<sup>37</sup>

In 1912 the brothers of Evangelical Christians from Odessa, who gathered on Kherson Street, decided to help us to open in our town the independent church. In Odessa they made benches and a table, and provided us with religious literature. The first meeting was held at Kishinev Street in the house of Zalov. The first leader of this small group was Ivan Schemachenko.... The first Baptism took place during Romanian rule in the estuary near the meat processing and packing factory.<sup>38</sup>

They were clearly Baptists because the baptism in the estuary shows that it was done by immersion. When Bessarabia became part of Romania in 1918, this group became acquainted with the similar group in Kishinev. Largely coming out of Stundism, with its stress on the Bible, the Baptists became a distinctive Moldovan movement.

<sup>33</sup> Porphiri, 'Open letter to those puzzled' p. 478.

<sup>34</sup> Golovashenko, *Istoria evangel'sko-Baptistskogo Dvijenja v Ukraine (Materialy i Dokumenty)*, p. 34.

<sup>35</sup> Porphiri, 'Open letter to those puzzled' p. 478.

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix N2.

<sup>37</sup> Trutza, 'A Short History of Romanian Baptists', p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Schemchishin, *The Origins and Development of the Evangelical Baptist Movement in Bessarabia*, p.14.

## **‘Israelites of the New Covenant’: Baptists and Jewish Christians**

There is another feature, an unusual one, about Baptist beginnings in this region. The Jewish pogroms in the southern provinces of the Russian Empire at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century destroyed the last Jewish hopes to find *shalom* in the Russian Empire. The Jews looked to Palestine where God promised them this *shalom*. In 1882, an influential member of the Kishinev Jewish community went to Palestine to find out how he might bring the Jews from Bessarabia. What he saw there was a destroyed and deserted Palestine that created an impression of hopelessness in his heart. The Jewish question brought him to the ‘empty tomb’ where he found Jesus, the Messiah, as his hope and redemption. His motto became: ‘The key to the Holy Land is in Jesus Christ’s hands’.<sup>39</sup> In 1883, in Kishinev, there came into being a group called ‘the Israelites of the New Covenant’ under the leadership of Joseph Rabinovich (1837-1899). He was born in Bessarabia, either in Orge’ev or Rezina, but lived most of his adult life in Kishinev. Some say that it is unreasonable to look for some doctrinal or practical connections between the Jewish Christians and Baptists in Kishinev because Rabinovich's community never advocated New Testament baptism. I want to argue otherwise.

First of all, in favour of the connections with and influence on the Baptists in Bessarabia of the ‘Israelites of the New Covenant’ (as Rabinovich called them) we can bring some events that took place in 1885, two years after the establishing of this community. In April of that year an invitation to the Baptist congress in the village of Astrakhanka in Tauria province was mailed to the representative of the ‘New Israel sect’ – Rabinovich.<sup>40</sup> This shows that the ‘New Israelites’ were accepted as part of the brotherhood by the Baptists. It is also evidence of the significant work done by Rabinovich in Kishinev from 1883. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, not only the conservative but also liberal Jewish magazines and newspapers were filled with criticisms of Rabinovich and the community of the Israelites of the New Covenant.<sup>41</sup> The *Jewish Herald* often tried to

<sup>39</sup> J. N. Axel’rud, *Dvijenie k Hristianstvu sredi Evreev v Kishineve, Rechy Vojdea etogo Dvijeniea J. D. Rabinovicha*, (The Movement to Christianity among the Jews in Kishinev, The Speeches of the Leader of this Movement J.D. Rabinovich.), (Kishinev: J. N. Axel’rud, 1893), p. 89.

<sup>40</sup> Golovashenko, *Istoria evangel’sko-Baptistskogo Dvijeniea v Ukraine (Materaili i Documenty)*, p. 108.

<sup>41</sup> Axel’rud, as the follower and the son-in-law of Rabinovich presents the Rabinovich ministry as significant among Jews, and also uses some Jewish press as examples of the hostile attitude to the work of Rabinovich. See more in J. N. Axel’rud, *Dvijenie k Hristianstvu sredi Evreev v Kishineve, Rechy Vojdea etogo Dvijeniea J. D. Rabinovicha*, (The Movement to Christianity among the Jews in Kishinev, The Speeches of the Leader of this Movement J.D. Rabinovich.), (Kishinev: J. N. Axel’rud, 1893).



minimise the significance of the conversions of the Jews in Kishinev.<sup>42</sup> Steven Zipperstein, who has written about this, talks about the Christian conversion of Rabinovich. Zipperstein mentions Rabinovich's conversion in a Congregationalist church in Leipzig in March 1885 as important, but it seems likely that this was his baptism. In December 1884 the London Society had refused to hire him as a missionary because 'their policy forbade them to employ an 'unbaptized agent',<sup>43</sup> and this may have helped to persuade him *to convert* - by baptism. Probably this baptism was not by immersion because it happened in a Congregationalist church.

Regarding Rabinovich and the Baptists, it is true that Rabinovich himself always tried to keep the Jewish national element (the culture and some traditions<sup>44</sup>) within his movement. But it is significant that the name he gave to the building he erected in Kishinev was the Bethlehem *prayer house*, not synagogue. This was a typical Baptist name. Also, the lack of clarity on the question of baptism does not exclude the possibility that believer's baptism was one of the convictions of Rabinovich. In one interview Rabinovich proclaimed 'I know that we have to have one clear ideal before our eyes: 'one Lord, one faith, one baptism' - here are the words of the Apostle, which we should impress on our hearts.'<sup>45</sup> But the forms of worship are not now our interest, he continued; the more important thing is for people to have personal strong convictions and join a church that will confess the teaching of Jesus Christ. When Rabinovich speaks about baptism the impression gained is that he may not have practised baptism in water in his group but that he was happy for those who joined churches to be baptised.

With Christ at the centre of his teaching and the Word of God as its foundation, Rabinovich worked hard to convince the Jews that Christ was the way, the truth, and the life for Jews as well as for Gentiles. According to a count made by Zipperstein, only thirteen Jews were converted by Rabinovich. However, if we think what it means for a Jew to become a Christian (and bearing in mind that in the terminology of Zipperstein, to be converted probably means to be baptised), then what happened in Kishinev was remarkable. The work with the Jews was continued by Lev Averbukh, through the office of the Mildmay Mission in Kishinev, and the most important development under Averbukh was the formation of the Kishinev United Community of the Evangelical Christian Baptists and Jews-

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<sup>42</sup> Zipperstein refers to the Jewish press abroad that often criticised Rabinovich's ministry. See more, Steven J. Zipperstein, 'Heresy, Apostasy, and the Transformation of Joseph Rabinovich' in Todd M. Endelman, ed., *Jewish Apostasy in the Modern World*, (New York: Holmes and Meyer, 1987).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 219, quoted from CMJ Minute Book, 1884, item 961.

<sup>44</sup> Axel'rud, *Dvijenie k Hristianstvu sredy Evreev v Kishineve, Rechy Vojdea etogo Dvijenieia J. D. Rabinovicha*, p. 85.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 90.

Christians. Lev Averbukh, the pastor of the Jewish group, became an influential member of the Baptist Union in Bessarabia. In addition, the prayer house and the associated Jewish graveyard that Rabinovich established became, through Rabonivich's family's work, the property of the Kishinev Jewish-Christians and Baptists. Close relationships between Jewish-Christians and Baptists in Bessarabia became possible because of the impact of Rabinovich's evangelical ministry among the Jews in Kishinev from 1883-1899 and this contributed to an unusual part of the Baptist story.

## **The Bessarabian Baptist Movement as a Whole**

The appearance of a widespread and organised Baptist movement in Bessarabia was strongly connected with some factors that we have already looked at above. Also, a significant role was played by the Act of Tolerance issued by the Russian Government in 1906. This partially opened the door for Baptists to have a public religious life and ministry, and baptisms began to be held in daylight. Until 1918 the main support and encouragement for the Bessarabian Baptists was rendered from Ukrainian churches of the Odessa district. In 1918 Bessarabia became part of the Romanian King's dominion, with strong Orthodox Church influences. During the first years under Romanian rule, Baptists had the same freedoms as after 1906 in the Russian Empire, but soon persecutions began, which continued up to 1928 when, under the pressure of world public opinion, and especially of the Baptist World Alliance,<sup>46</sup> the Romanian Parliament issued a law that gave Baptists 'full' freedom. This was on paper as, in reality, it was only partial freedom.

In 1918, in the first period when there was more freedom, the Bessarabian Baptist Union was founded and delegates gathered. It was a small beginning with only seven delegates.<sup>47</sup> In 1920, according to the History of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists in USSR, a convention was organised by the Bessarabian Baptist Union and, from different parts of Bessarabia, 350 delegates gathered under the presiding leadership of

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<sup>46</sup> Baptist World Alliance, Minute Book, Continental Committee, November 4, 1924, p. 72. 'Dr Rushbrooke read a letter describing the interferences with the Baptists on the part of the Rumanian authorities in Bessarabia. He reported that the British Foreign Office would probably be taking some action before long.'

<sup>47</sup> The Conference in London played a most important role for the beginning of the evangelical, social, and financial help for the Eastern part of Europe that suffered from the destruction of the War. Charles A. Brooks & J. H. Rushbrooke, *Baptist Work in Europe*, Report of Commissioners of the Baptist World Alliance, presented at the Conference in London, July 19, 1920, (London: Baptist Union Publication Department, 1920), p. 51.

Vaslily Asiev, who then became the president of the Union.<sup>48</sup> Craighead wrote that in 1921 the Bessarabian Baptist Union was organised, and in the same year it became a part of the Baptist World Alliance.<sup>49</sup> This does not take account of the events of the previous three years. From 1920 to 1922 the Bessarabian Union published the magazine *Drug* (*The Friend* – the editor was Lev Averbukh) and, for the spiritual enrichment of Baptists, Ivanov ordered the magazines *Baptist Ukrainy*, *Christian*, *Slovo Istiny* (*Word of Truth*), *Utrennya Zvesda* (*Morning Star*), *Vernost'* (*Faithfulness*), *Seyatel'* (*Sower*) and others. Also the Bessarabian Union was part of the All-Romanian Union of Baptist Churches.<sup>50</sup>

Even in the difficult years of the 1920s the work continued, and in the years after 1928 there was further advance. The results were significant. For instance, in 1931, Everett Gill wrote that ten years ago there was not a single chapel and 'now there are thirty-five and twenty others planned'.<sup>51</sup> It was not quite the case that there had been no chapels in 1921 because Baptists in Kishinev had their own prayer house. The lack of awareness of that is an indication that many features of the story have not, up to this point, been fully told. In this essay we have looked mainly at the period that produced organised Baptist life. By 1933 the Bessarabian Baptist Union had:

238 organised churches; 408 groups; 48 ordained pastors; 46 active leaders; 9,933 members of churches; 172 Sunday schools with 3,520 children; 146 women auxiliaries with 2,271 members; 123 young people's societies with 1,510 members<sup>52</sup>...and 78 chapels.<sup>53</sup>

The story of the Bessarabian (now Moldovan) Baptists is of growth – which still continues today.

## Conclusion

We have looked at four major movements that influenced the emergence of Baptists in Bessarabia: Germans, Molokans, Stundists and Jewish Christians. A central theme has been the way in which people studied the Bible and came to Baptist convictions. The access of the Bible in the native language of the people was vital to satisfy the religious hunger of the Bessarabians. A very interesting point was made by Cogutz in 1940, when

<sup>48</sup> *Istoria EKhB v SSSR*, (History of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists in USSR), (Moscow: All-Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in USSR, 1985) p. 383.

<sup>49</sup> Walter Craighead, 'The Gospel in Bessarabia' in *Home and Foreign Fields*, April 1935, p. 10.

<sup>50</sup> Trutza, 'A Short History of Romanian Baptists', p. 13.

<sup>51</sup> Everett Gill, *Europe and the Gospel*, (Richmond, Virginia: Foreign Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1931) p. 80.

<sup>52</sup> Craighead, 'The Gospel in Bessarabia', p. 10.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

he said that Baptists in Bessarabia could have spread so widely because of the 'deep religious character' of the people and because of the evangelistic mood of every new believer. 'Baptist men and women, in the markets, on the trains, in the fields, in the houses, preached the wonderful gospel of the love of Jesus',<sup>54</sup> and the life they lived was a strict life of holiness. I have argued that the key influence was through the Stundists, but I have also shown the role of other groups and have included the Jewish Christians. There are unusual features in this story. 'The Baptists in Bessarabia', said Cogutz, 'with their wonderful evangelistic zeal and success, with their capacity for suffering, with their deep experience of fellowship with Christ are one of the most interesting groups of Baptists in the world.'<sup>55</sup> 'Yes, brother, so!'

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<sup>54</sup> Cocutz, 'Baptists of Bessarabia', p. 886.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 887.

## **PEOPLE LEARN BEST WHEN**

### **Practical Tips on How People Learn**

#### **Introduction**

When you speak, preach, write, or just communicate do you know how people learn? Often we are faced with the daunting task of a speech, a sermon or an article to write. We approach our assignment from what we want to say and the way we want to say it. All well and good, but have you ever considered the best condition under which people learn? Would you not increase the probability that people would remember the things you say if you gave consideration to the way in which they learn. This article considers some of the ways in which people learn. Having taught for over thirty years now, I do not remember when I first saw these or their source. I have changed them over the years and included some that I have observed from my years in teaching, speaking, preaching and writing.

#### **People learn best when they are physically and emotionally comfortably**

Let's start with the basics. This one applies more to speaking, preaching and teaching than it does to writing. Physical comfort is important to learning. The physical surroundings of any setting can directly influence learning. Take a look at the seating, the heating/cooling, the lighting; people need to be comfortable to enhance learning probability. Room design is important to good communication. Poor quality of seats will make people uncomfortable, if it is too cold or too hot people will be distracted, inadequate lighting and people's eyes will be strained. While these things appear to be simple and obvious, you would be surprised at how often these kinds of things are ignored by otherwise good planners and trainers. Check out all the physical facilities in detail, work to see that all of your people are physically comfortable in the setting. Attention to detail is a characteristic of highly successful communicators.

How do I make people emotionally comfortable? What does it take to make YOU emotionally comfortable? People who are settled in their emotions are more likely to pay attention and absorb your content than those who are under emotional stress. In this area there are certain things outside of your control. Here are four things in the area of emotions over which you have no control: the environment from which a person comes, the home life from which a person comes, the personal life of a person and the emotional stability of a person.

There are four things that you have direct control over that can help make a person feel emotionally comfortable: how you welcome people (if it is possible to do this), how you address people, how you react to people and how you attend to people's expressed needs. If possible, greet each person as they enter the room. Come early and meet people. Make them feel comfortable, find out information about them; share information about yourself, show them you are interested in them as individuals. Everyone has a name. A name makes a person unique. If possible, set up your session in a way that allows for the use of people's names. Have name cards available to be placed where you can see each person's name from your position. You can make it cordial, but it does not have to be intimate. A central characteristic of leadership is how you both act and react to circumstances. Leaders tend to act and not react. Often, however, questions and comments in seminars are of such a nature that the response of the presenter can swing the emotional mood of the session. No matter what the charge or tones of the audience, you must remain calm and respond in ways that alleviate stress, anger, and frustration while producing an emotional environment of calm and tranquility. You should present materials in ways that encourage participation and make people feel comfortable in asking questions and interacting on content. However, occasionally people express needs that go beyond the immediate situation. These may be needs that are deep rooted and can, and should, be dealt with under different circumstances. This type of situation must always be handled with tact and poise. Allay the immediate tension, redirect and come back to the emotional point of stress at a later, more appropriate time.

Emotional comfort and physical comfort are important for effective training.

### **People learn best when they select or help select problems or goals of real interest to them and/or ways of approaching goals**

Adults are often distinctive in this. People like to be involved in selecting and designing goals and objectives for learning. In this way they feel ownership and believe they are an integral part of the programme. How often people perceive that what they are receiving is not of real interest to them because they were not involved in the selection process, or the needs were determined by a person who is not in touch with the needs of the church, organisation or company. Common sense dictates that the more people are involved in selecting ways to approach a problem or need, the better probability there is that the need will be met, especially if the suggestions come from the people who perceived the need originally.

If the people that have the needs are involved in the process of design, then you are more likely to get a pragmatic, workable result than if you plan on theory. But theory cannot be ignored because most people are workers within a system and only see their part of the process, while you need to see the entire process and make adjustments based on the whole picture not just the parts.

Perhaps the best example of this that I know is the story I heard about the design of the Boeing 777 aircraft. I have no way of validating this but the illustration remains the same even if it is not true in detail. Aeronautical engineers made the first designs of the 777 using all the latest technologies. It was designed and redesigned and redesigned. Towards the end of the process, one of the engineers thought it might be a good idea to pull together a group of people that would actually be involved in flying and working on the aircraft, and those who would in some way be involved when the aircraft was ultimately placed in service. At the first meeting, a very significant detail was noted that had been overlooked by some of the best aeronautical minds in the world. Under current conditions and using current equipment, the people fueling the aircraft would have to have been at least 15 feet tall. After much talk, the plane had to be redesigned or alternatively all the equipment used at airports around the world modified to address the problem. The plane was redesigned! Also, a number of other practical suggestions by caterers, flight attendants and other groups were incorporated into the new and final design.

Know your audience and make sure you have not designed a presentation that needs a 15-foot tall person to understand it.

## **People learn best through realistic and predominately first hand experiences**

As a preacher, speaker or writer you are often not given the opportunity to engage the audience in realistic and predominately first hand experiences. When you can do this, by all means do, but it is not likely to occur. The other way to address this is to give first hand experiences in the form of illustrations and examples in your presentations. A very simple example on the topic of realistic experiences is one I use about illustrations when I speak. When I taught in the Netherlands, I did not give, as an example, anything to do with a cactus. This was not practical in a culture where the cactus is not prevalent. When I taught in Arizona in the United States, I did not give examples based on ice-skating on frozen canals. How do you suppose the first astronauts prepared for driving a car on the moon? There was no way to have a first hand experience as it had never been done before and new equipment had to be invented to accomplish the task of

astronaut mobility on the moon's surface. How were the astronauts able to practice? They practiced in New Mexico on an old lava bed where the best research indicated that the rocks on the moon would at least be similar.

Authors who are most successful are those who seem to be able to engage their readers in first hand experiences by writing vicariously about them. I once received a book from a well-known Christian author who apologised in his note to me at the beginning on not doing his research properly and misnaming a street in the novel. He had done his research but not well enough. Interestingly, it is the only attempt I know of his working in the genre of fictional work.

Preachers, likewise, are faced with unique challenges in preparing sermons with realistic and predominately first hand experiences. How does one best convey a supernatural experience or concept to a finite mind? This has challenged the best of preachers over the years and still does today. Stories of changed lives are one way we do this. Another way is the use of finite examples that can best describe indescribable concepts. Perhaps a quintessential example of this is the challenge of coming up with a finite example of the Trinity. Would you use water as an example – liquid, ice and steam – or is this too modal? Would you use a set of parallel lines that are dotted, not solid, to indicate the degree to which the three are not separate but one? Yes, the preacher has a special challenge in this category of learning.

### **People learn best when they are challenged (not threatened) within the range of their abilities**

Sadly, in the world in which we live, as in all of life, there are people who lead through intimidation. Coaches are notorious for this in athletics. One cannot ignore what this type of leader can achieve. Perhaps the best example of this is in the military where intimidation has often been used because of the nature of response under extreme stress and conflict. So, if you are addressing an army today you might want to consider this approach. However, this is not our job. We do not use intimidation. Perhaps it is different in Europe, but in America I purport that the young adults of the 1990s are different than any other group of young adults that I have worked with over the past four decades. Because they are different it requires a different type of skill to keep them satisfied in the Christian life. As a lecturer of university students, I needed to know the abilities of my students to learn.

We want to challenge the people we work with, and address them rather than threaten them. We want to utilise the horse and carrot technique, always keeping the goal just beyond their grasp, always



challenging but always within the realm of their abilities. One of the most difficult tasks is to set our work at the correct level of difficulty. When we preach, at what level is the sermon set? Is the sermon for the young, the old or the parents of the children? When you speak, do you set your level of vocabulary at the level that most can understand? When you write, have you considered your most likely audience? That is, how do we enable our work to be challenging but neither too threatening nor too easy? How do we teach within the range of our students' abilities? The first question to address then is how to determine an audience's capacity for learning? What is their learning quotient? That would be too much to cover at this time, but it is a necessary ingredient in the proper and efficient planning to be an effective preacher, speaker, teacher or writer!

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Peter F Penner**

***Teach All the Nations ... The Mission of Theological Education***

(In Russian: *Nauchite vse nadrodi ... Missia bogoslovskogo obrazovania*)

Translated from German by D.B.Dmitriev

Sanct - Peterburg, 'Biblia dlia Vseh' Publisher, 1999, 336 pp.

For those in touch with the realities of Post-Soviet developments in Eastern and Central Europe, the book of Dr Peter F Penner – the renowned expert of theological education – may come as no surprise. There has been a booming emergence of theological educational institutions in the region in the last decade of the twentieth century. It has been a formative period of educational developments, free from direct governmental intrusion and ideological limitations. An attempt to summarise and scrutinise educational currents was expected. The book may be seen as a response to that need. It goes, however, far beyond the task of analyses and discernment of existing patterns of religious education. As Dr Sergei Sannikov rightfully points out in the forward to the book, the real drive in writing it is the author's keen interest in missiology. Peter Penner leads his readers to realise that theological education is not a preparation for a mission or a service, it is a mission in itself.

The book is a result of Penner's in depth doctoral research of the definitive factors for the development of theological education in Russia and the former Soviet Union. Written from a conservative evangelical position, the book is conscientiously keeping the balance of three perspectives on theological education: the biblical mandate, the dynamics and the influence of the international educational structures on theological education in Eastern Europe, and the tradition of religious education both Orthodox and Protestant in the territories of the former Soviet Union. It looks critically on the formation of educational structures by asking the crucial question of why? What is the reason of engaging in theological education? Dr Penner is inviting his readers to see not only the structural and the epistemic, but also the strategic and the spiritual components of educational activity. Education is holistic and it is contextual. It can be successful only if it is a response to the genuine needs of local religious communities.

The emphasis on the development of indigenous educational structures is reflected in the analyses of the contemporary trends of Protestant religious education. It is not by chance that Dr Penner's project

has been completed in parallel with and in close attention to the formation of the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association. (It is significant to note that the time of submission of his doctoral research work and of registration of EAAA almost coincided. Most of his formative ideas have been tested by and taken into the work of EAAA.) Penner's passion is for training national faculties to be academically sound and spiritually mature, and which can creatively apply existing educational models and develop new ones relevant to the specifics of the cultural and religious context.

In the limited volume of the book, Dr Penner has succeeded in presenting a comprehensive picture of the development of theological education in the territories of the former Soviet Union. His striving for historical accuracy and his attention to detail are impressive. The book is very well documented. Readers will definitely appreciate his critical and synthetic work with its vast amount of primary and secondary sources.

The book accomplishes its purpose. It is an important resource for understanding the role of theological education in the broader context of Eastern and Central Europe. It is timely, fresh and innovative, undertaking to review the current state and to offer new perspectives. The book is calling also for another important step to follow. There is a need for a closer look at the intimate relationship of theological education and the church. Properly understood religious education is a superstructure of the church's life, which has to be the primary point of reference of any educational endeavour. A detailed analysis and a critical evaluation of the relevance of theological institutions to the life of their respective religious communities are needed.

**The Revd Dr Parush Parushev**  
Director of Applied Theology, IBTS

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